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THE

WORKS

OF

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY,

WITH

HIS LIFE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY JOHN ASCHAM, 71, CHANCERY LANE, HOLBORN,

AND SOLD BY JAMES PATTIE, 16, HIGH STREET, BLOOMSBURY, AND ALL BOOKSELLERS IN TOWN AND COUNTRY.

1834.

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PREFACE.

It had been my wish, on presenting the public with the Posthumous Poems of Mr. Shelley, to have accompanied them by a biographical notice: as it appeared to me, that at this moment a narration of the events of my husband's life would come more gracefully from other hands than mine, I applied to Mr. Leigh Hunt. The distinguished friendship that Mr. Shelley felt for him, and the enthusiastic affection with which Mr. Leigh Hunt clings to his friend's memory, seemed to point him out as the person best calculated for such an undertaking. His absence from this country, which prevented our mutual explanation, has unfortunately rendered my scheme abortive. I do not doubt but that on some other occasion he will pay this tribute to his lost friend, and sincerely regret that the volume which I edit has not been honoured by its insertion.

The comparative solitude in which Mr. Shelley lived, was the occasion that he was personally known to few; and his fearless enthusiasm in the cause which he considered the most sacred upon earth, the improvement of the moral and physical state of mankind, was the chief reason why he, like other illustrious reformers, was pursued by hatred and calumny. No man

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was ever more devoted than he, to the endeavour of making those around him happy; no man ever possessed friends more unfeignedly attached to him. The ungrateful world did not feel his loss, and the gap it made seemed to close as quickly over his memory as the murderous sea above his living frame. Hereafter men will lament that his transcendent powers of intellect were extinguished before they had bestowed on them their choicest treasures. To his friends his loss is irremediable: the wise, the brave, the gentle, is gone for ever! He is to them as a bright vision, whose radiant track, left behind in the memory, is worth all the realities that society can afford. Before the critics contradict me, let them appeal to any one who had ever known him: to see him was to love him; and his presence, like Ithuriel's spear, was alone sufficient to disclose the falsehood of the tale which his enemies whispered in the ear of the ignorant world.

His life was spent in the contemplation of nature, in arduous study, or in acts of kindness and affection. He was an elegant scholar and a profound metaphysician: without possessing much scientific knowledge, he was unrivalled in the justness and extent of his observations on natural objects; he knew every plant by its name, and was familiar with the history and habits of every production of the earth; he could interpret without a fault each appearance in the sky, and the varied phenomena of heaven and earth filled him with deep emotion. He made his study and reading-room

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of the shadowed copse, the stream, the lake, and the waterfall. Ill health and continual pain preyed upon his powers, and the solitude in which we lived, particularly on our first arrival in Italy, although congenial to his feelings, must frequently have weighed upon his spirits: those beautiful and affecting "Lines, written in dejection at Naples," were composed at such an interval; but, when in health, his spirits were buoyant and youthful to an extraordinary degree.

Such was his love for nature, that every page of his poetry is associated in the minds of his friends with the loveliest scenes of the countries which he inhabited. In early life he visited the most beautiful parts of this country and Ireland. Afterwards the Alps of Switzerland became his inspirers. "Prometheus Unbound" was written among the deserted and flower-grown ruins of Rome, and when he made his home under the Pisan hills, their roofless recesses harboured him as he com- "The Witch of Atlas," "Adonais" and "Hellas." In the wild but beautiful Bay of Spezia, the winds and waves which he loved became his playmates. His days were chiefly spent on the water; the management of his boat, its alterations and improvements, were his principal occupation. At night, when the unclouded moon shone on the calm sea, he often went alone in his little shallop to the rocky caves that bordered it, and sitting beneath their shelter wrote "The Triumph of Life," the last of his productions. The beauty but strangeness of this lonely place, the refined pleasure

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which he felt in the companionship of a few selected friends, our entire sequestration from the rest of the world, all contributed to render this period of his life one of continued enjoyment. I am convinced that the two months we passed there were the happiest which he had ever known: his health even rapidly improved, and he was never better than when I last saw him, full of spirits and joy, embark for Leghorn, that he might there welcome LEIGH HUNT to Italy. I was to have accompanied him, but illness confined me to my room, and thus put the seal on my misfortune. His vessel bore out of sight with a favourable wind, and I remained awaiting his return by the breakers of that sea which was about to engulph him.

He spent a week at Pisa, employed in kind offices towards his friend, and enjoying with keen delight the renewal of their intercourse. He then embarked with Mr. WILLIAMS, the chosen and beloved sharer of his pleasures and of his fate, to return to us. We waited for them in vain; the sea by its restless moaning seemed to desire to inform us of what we would not learn:—— but a veil may well be drawn over such misery. The real anguish of these moments transcended all the fictions that the most glowing imagination ever portrayed: our seclusion, the savage nature of the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, and our immediate vicinity to the troubled sea, combined to embue with strange horror our days of uncertainty. The truth was at last known,—a truth that made our loved and lovely

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Italy appear a tomb, its sky a pall. Every heart echoed the deep lament, and my only consolation was in the praise and earnest love that each voice bestowed and each countenance demonstrated for him we had lost,—not, I fondly hope, for ever: his unearthly and elevated nature is a pledge of the continuation of his being, altho' in an altered form. Rome received his ashes; they are deposited beneath its weed-grown wall, and "the world's sole monument" is enriched by his remains.

I must add a few words concerning the contents of this volume. "Julian and Maddalo," "The Witch of Atlas," and most of the Translations, were written some years ago, and, with the exception of "The Cyclops," and the Scenes from the "Magico Prodigioso," may be considered as having received the author's ultimate corrections. "The Triumph of Life" was his last work, and was left in so unfinished a state, that I arranged it in its present form with great difficulty. All his poems which were scattered in periodical works are collected in this volume, and I have added a reprint of "Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude:" — the difficulty with which a copy can be obtained is the cause of its republication. Many of the Miscellaneous Poems, written on the spur of the occasion, and never retouched, I found among his manuscript books, and have carefully copied. I have subjoined, whenever I have been able, the date of their composition.

I do not know whether the critics will reprehend the insertion of some of the most imperfect among these;

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but I frankly own, that I have been more actuated by the fear lest any monument of his genius should escape me, than the wish of presenting nothing but what was complete to the fastidious reader. I feel secure that the Lovers of SHELLEY's Poetry (who know how more than any other poet of the present day every line and word he wrote is instinct with peculiar beauty) will pardon and thank me: I consecrate this volume to them.

The size of this collection has prevented the insertion of any prose pieces. They will hereafter appear in a separate publication.

MARY W. SHELLEY.

London, June 1st, 1824.

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ROSALIND AND HELEN,

A MODERN ECLOGUE;

WITH

OTHER POEMS.

BY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

LONDON:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY JOHN ASCHAM, 71, CHANCERY LANE, HOLBORN, AND SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1834.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE story of " Rosalind and Helen," is, undoubtedly, not an attempt in the highest style of poetry. It is in no degree calculated to excite profound meditation; and if, by interesting the affections and amusing the imagination, it awaken a certain ideal melancholy favourable to the reception of more important impressions, it will produce in the reader all that the writer experienced in the composition. I resigned myself, as I wrote, to the impulse of the feelings which moulded the conception of the story; and this impulse determined the pauses of a measure which only pretends to be regular inasmuch as it corresponds with, and expresses, the irregularity of the imaginations which inspired it.

I do not know which of the few scattered poems I left in England will be selected by my bookseller to add to this collection. One, which I sent from Italy, was written after a day's excursion among those lovely mountains which surround what was once the retreat, and where is now the sepulchre, of Petrarch. If any one is inclined to condemn the insertion of the introductory lines, which image forth the sudden relief of a state of deep despondency by the radiant visions disclosed by the sudden burst of an Italian sunrise in autumn on the highest peak of those delightful mountains,

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I can only offer as my excuse, that they were not erased at the request of a dear friend, with whom added years of intercourse only add to my apprehension of its value, and who would have had more right than any one to complain, that she has not been able to extinguish in me the very power of delineating sadness.

Naples, Dec. 20, 1818.

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ROSALIND AND HELEN.

Rosalind, Helen, and her Child.

Scene, the Shore of the Lake of Como.

Helen. Come hither, my sweet Rosalind.
'Tis long since thou and I have met;
And yet methinks it were unkind
Those moments to forget.
Come sit by me. I see thee stand
By this lone lake, in this far land,
Thy loose hair in the light wind flying,
Thy sweet voice to each tone of even
United, and thine eyes replying
To the hues of yon fair heaven.
Come, gentle friend: wilt sit by me?
And be as thou wert wont to be
Ere we were disunited?
None doth behold us now: the power
That led us forth at this lone hour
Will be but ill requited
If thou depart in scorn: oh! come,
And talk of our abandoned home.
Remember, this is Italy,
And we are exiles. Talk with me
Of that our land, whose wilds and floods,
Barren and dark although they be,
Were dearer than these chesnut woods:
Those heathy paths, that inland stream,
And the blue mountains, shapes which seem
Like wrecks of childhood's sunny dream:

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Which that we have abandoned now,
Weighs on the heart like that remorse
Which altered friendship leaves. I seek
No more our youthful intercourse.
That cannot be! Rosalind, speak,
Speak to me. Leave me not.—When morn did come,
When evening fell upon our common home,
When for one hour we parted,—do not frown:
I would not chide thee, though thy faith is broken:
But turn to me. Oh! by this cherished token,
Of woven hair, which thou wilt not disown,
Turn, as 'twere but the memory of me,
And not my scorned self who prayed to thee.

Rosalind. Is it a dream, or do I see
And hear frail Helen? I would flee
Thy tainting touch; but former years
Arise, and bring forbidden tears;
And my o'erburthened memory
Seeks yet its lost repose in thee.
I share thy crime. I cannot choose
But weep for thee: mine own strange grief
But seldom stoops to such relief:
Nor ever did I love thee less,
Though mourning o'er thy wickedness
Even with a sister's woe. I knew
What to the evil world is due,
And therefore sternly did refuse
To link me with the infamy
Of one so lost as Helen. Now,
Bewildered by my dire despair,
Wondering I blush, and weep that thou
Should'st love me still,—thou only!—There,

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Let us sit on that grey stone,
Till our mournful talk be done.

Helen. Alas! not there; I cannot bear
The murmur of this lake to hear.
A sound from thee, Rosalind dear,
Which never yet I heard elsewhere
But in our native land, recurs,
Even here where now we meet. It stirs
Too much of suffocating sorrow!
In the dell of yon dark chesnut wood
Is a stone seat, a solitude
Less like our own. The ghost of peace
Will not desert this spot. To-morrow,
If thy kind feelings should not cease,
We may sit here.

Rosalind. Thou lead, my sweet,
And I will follow.

Henry. 'Tis Fenici's seat
Where you are going? This is not the way.
Mamma; it leads behind those trees that grow
Close to the little river.

Helen. Yes—I know—
I was bewildered. Kiss me, and be gay,
Dear boy—why do you sob?

Henry. I do not know—
But it might break any one's heart to see
You and the lady cry so bitterly.

Helen. It is a gentle child, my friend. Go home,
Henry, and play with Lilla till I come.

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We only cried with joy to see each other;
We are quite merry now: Good night.

The boy
Lifted a sudden look upon his mother,
And in the gleam of forced and hollow joy
Which lightened o'er her face, laughed with the glee
Of light and unsuspecting infancy,
And whispered in her ear, "Bring home with you
That sweet strange lady-friend." Then off he flew,
But stopt, and beckoned with a meaning smile,
Where the road turned. Pale Rosalind the while,
Hiding her face, stood weeping silently.

In silence then they took the way
Beneath the forest's solitude.
It was a vast and antique wood,
Thro' which they took their way;
And the grey shades of evening
O'er that green wilderness did fling
Still deeper solitude.
Pursuing still the path that wound
The vast and knotted trees around
Thro' which slow shades were wandering,
To a deep lawny dell they came,
To a stone seat beside a spring,
O'er which the columned wood did frame
A roofless temple, like the fane
Where, ere new creeds could faith obtain,
Man's early race once knelt beneath
The overhanging deity.
O'er this fair fountain hung the sky,
Now splangled with rare stars. The snake,
The pale snake, that with eager breath
Creeps here his noontide thirst to slake,

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Is beaming with many a mingled hue,
Shed from yon dome's eternal blue,
When he floats on that dark and lucid flood
In the light of his own loveliness;
And the birds that in the fountain dip
Their plumes, with fearless fellowship
Above and round him wheel and hover.
The fitful wind is heard to stir
One solitary leaf on high;
The chirping of the grasshopper
Fills every pause. There is emotion
In all that dwells at noontide here:
Then, thro' the intricate wild wood,
A maze of life and light and motion
Is woven. But there is stillness now;
Gloom, and the trance of Nature now;
The snake is in his cave asleep;
The birds are on the branches dreaming;
Only the shadows creep;
Only the glow-worm is gleaming;
Only the owls and the nightingales
Wake in this dell when day-light fails,
And grey shades gather in the woods;
And the owls have all fled far away
In a merrier glen to hoot and play,
For the moon is veiled and sleeping now.
The accustomed nightingale still broods
On her accustomed bough,
But she is mute; for her false mate
Has fled and left her desolate.

This silent spot tradition old
Had peopled with the spectral dead.
For the roots of the speaker's hair felt cold

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And stiff, as with tremulous lips he told
That a hellish shape at midnight led
The ghost of a youth with hoary hair,
And sate on the seat beside him there,
Till a naked child came wandering by,
When the fiend would change to a lady fair!
A fearful tale! The truth was worse;
For here a sister and a brother
Had solemnized a monstrous curse,
Meeting in this fair solitude:
For beneath yon very sky,
Had they resigned to one another
Body and soul. The multitude,
Tracking them to the secret wood,
Tore limb from limb their innocent child,
And stabbed and trampled on it's mother;
But the youth, for God's most holy grace,
A priest saved to burn in the market-place.

Duly at evening Helen came
To this lone silent spot,
From the wrecks of a tale of wilder sorrow
So much of sympathy to borrow
As soothed her own dark lot.
Duly each evening from her home,
With her fair child would Helen come
To sit upon that antique seat,
While the hues of day were pale;
And the bright boy beside her feet
Now lay, lifting at intervals
His broad blue eyes upon her;
Now, where some sudden impulse calls,
Following. He was a gentle boy,
And in all gentle sports took joy;

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Oft in a dry leaf for a boat,
With a small feather for a sail,
His fancy on that spring would float,
If some invisible breeze might stir
It's marble calm: and Helen smiled
Thro' tears of awe on the gay child,
To think that a boy as fair as he,
In years which never more may be,
By that same fount, in that same wood,
The like sweet fancies had pursued;
And that a mother, lost like her,
Had mournfully sate watching him.
Then all the scene was wont to swim
Through the mist of a burning tear.

For many months had Helen known
This scene: and now she thither turned
Her footsteps, not alone.
The friend, whose falsehood she had mourned,
Sate with her on that seat of stone.
Silent they sate; for evening,
And the power it's glimpses bring,
Had, with one awful shadow, quelled
The passion of their grief. They sate
With linked hands, for unrepelled
Had Helen taken Rosalind's.
Like the autumn wind, when it unbinds
The tangled locks of the nightshade's hair,
Which is twined in the sultry summer air
Round the walls of an outworn sepulchre,
Did the voice of Helen, sad and sweet,
And the sound of her heart that ever beat,
As with sighs and words she breathed on her,
Unbind the knots of her friend's despair,

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Till her thoughts were free to float and flow;
And from her labouring bosom now,
Like the bursting of a prisoned flame,
The voice of a long pent sorrow came.

Rosalind. I saw the dark earth fall upon
The coffin; and I saw the stone
Laid over him whom this cold breast
Had pillowed to his nightly rest!
Thou knowest not, thou can'st not know
My agony. Oh! I could not weep;
The sources whence such blessings flow
Were not to be approached by me!
But I could smile, and I could sleep,
Though with a self-accusing heart.
In morning's light, and evening's gloom,
watched,—and would not thence depart—
My husband's unlamented tomb.
My children knew their sire was gone,
But when I told them,—'he is dead,'—
They laughed aloud in frantic glee,
They clapped their hands and leaped about;
Answering each other's ecstacy
With many a prank and merry shout;
But I sat silent and alone,
Wrapped in the mock of mourning weed.

They laughed, for he was dead: but I
Sate with a hard and tearless eye,
And with a heart which would deny
The secret joy it could not quell,
Low muttering o'er his loathed name;
Till from that self-contention came

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Remorse where sin was none; a hell
Which in pure spirits should not dwell.

I'll tell thee truth. He was a man
Hard, selfish, loving only gold,
Yet full of guile: his pale eyes ran
With tears, which each some falsehood told,
And oft his smooth and bridled tongue
Would give the lie to his flushing cheek:
He was a coward to the strong:
He was a tyrant to the weak,
On whom his vengeance he would wreak:
For scorn, whose arrows search the heart,
From many a stranger's eye would dart,
And on his memory cling, and follow
His soul to it's home so cold and hollow.
He was a tyrant to the weak,
And we were such, alas the day!
Oft, when my little ones at play,
Were in youth's natural lightness gay,
Or if they listened to some tale
Of travellers, or of fairy land,—
When the light from the wood-fire's dying brand
Flashed on their faces,—if they heard
Or thought they heard upon the stair
His footstep, the suspended word
Died on my lips; we all grew pale;
The babe at my bosom was hushed with fear
If it thought it heard its father near;
And my two wild boys would near my knee
Cling, cowed and cowering fearfully.

I'll tell thee truth. I loved another.
His name in my ear was ever ringing,
His form to my brain was ever clinging;

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Yet if some stranger breathed that name,
My lips turned white, and my heart beat fast:
My nights were once haunted by dreams of flame,
My days were dim in the shadow cast,
By the memory of the same!
Day and night, day and night,
He was my breath and life and light,
For three short years, which soon were past.
On the fourth, my gentle mother
Led me to the shrine, to be
His sworn bride eternally.
And now we stood on the altar stair,
When my father came from a distant land,
And with a loud and fearful cry
Rushed between us suddenly.
I saw the stream of his thin grey hair,
I saw his lean and lifted hand,
And heard his words,—and live! O God!
Wherefore do I live?—'Hold, hold!'
He cried,—'I tell thee 'tis her brother!
Thy mother, boy, beneath the sod
Of yon church-yard rests in her shroud so cold:
I am now weak, and pale, and old:
We were once dear to one another,
I and that corpse! Thou art our child!'
Then with a laugh both long and wild
The youth upon the pavement fell;
They found him dead! All looked on me,
The spasms of my despair to see;
But I was calm. I went away:
I was clammy-cold like clay!
I did not weep; I did not speak;
But day by day, week after week,
I walked about like a corpse alive!

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Alas, sweet friend, you must believe
This heart is stone: it did not break.

My father lived a little while,
But all might see that he was dying,
He smiled with such a woful smile!
When he was in the church-yard lying
Among the worms, we grew quite poor,
So that no one would give us bread;
My mother looked at me, and said
Faint words of cheer, which only meant
That she could die and be content;
So I went forth from the same church door
To another husband's bed.
And this was he who died at last,
When weeks and months and years had past,
Through which I firmly did fulfil
My duties, a devoted wife,
With the stern step of vanquished will,
Walking beneath the night of life,
Whose hours extinguished, like slow rain
Falling for ever, pain by pain,
The very hope of death's dear rest;
Which, since the heart within my breast
Of natural life was dispossest,
It's strange sustainer there had been.

When flowers were dead, and grass was green
Upon my mother's grave,—that mother
Whom to outlive, and cheer, and make
My wan eyes glitter for her sake,
Was my vowed task, the single care
Which once gave life to my despair,—
When she was a thing that did not stir,
And the crawling worms were cradling her

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To a sleep more deep and so more sweet
Than a baby's rocked on its nurse's knee,
I lived: a living pulse then beat
Beneath my heart that awakened me.
What was this pulse so warm and free?
Alas! I knew it could not be
My own dull blood: 'twas like a thought
Of liquid love, that spread and wrought
Under my bosom and in my brain,
And crept with the blood through every vein;
And hour by hour, day after day,
The wonder could not charm away,
But laid in sleep, my wakeful pain,
Until I knew it was a child,
And then I wept. For long, long years
These frozen eyes had shed no tears:
But now—'twas the season fair and mild
When April has wept itself to May;
I sate through the sweet sunny day
By my window bowered round with leaves,
And down my cheeks the quick tears ran
Like twinkling rain-drops from the eaves,
When warm spring showers are passing o'er:
O Helen, none can ever tell
The joy it was to weep once more!

I wept to think how hard it were
To kill my babe, and take from it
The sense of light, and the warm air,
And my own fond and tender care,
And love, and smiles; ere I knew yet
That these for it might, as for me,
Be the masks of a grinning mockery.
And haply, I would dream, 'twere

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To feed it from my faded breast,
Or mark my own heart's restless beat
Rock it to its untroubled rest,
And watch the growing soul beneath
Dawn in faint smiles; and hear its breath,
Half interrupted by calm sighs,
And search the depth of its fair eyes
For long departed memories!
And so I lived till that sweet load
Was lightened. Darkly forward flowed
The stream of years, and on it bore
Two shapes of gladness to my sight;
Two other babes, delightful more
In my lost soul's abandoned night,
Than their own country ships may be
Sailing towards wrecked mariners,
Who cling to the rock of a wintry sea.
For each, as it came, brought soothing tears,
And a loosening warmth, as each one lay
Sucking the sullen milk away
About my frozen heart, did play,
And weaned it, oh how painfully!
As they themselves were weaned each one
From that sweet food,—even from the thirst
Of death, and nothingness, and rest,
Strange inmate of a living breast!
Which all that I had undergone
Of grief and shame, since she, who first
The gates of that dark refuge closed,
Came to my sight, and almost burst
The seal of that Lethean spring;
But these fair shadows interposed:
For all delights are shadows now!
And from my brain to my dull brow

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The heavy tears gather and flow;
I cannot speak; Oh let me weep!

The tears which fell from her wan eyes
Glimmered among the moonlight dew:
Her deep hard sobs and heavy sighs
Their echoes in the darkness threw.
When she grew calm, she thus did keep
The tenor of her tale:

He died:
I know not how: he was not old,
If age be numbered by its years:
But he was bowed and bent with fears,
Pale with the quenchless thirst of gold,
Which, like fierce fever left him weak;
And his strait lip and bloated cheek
Were warped in spasms by hollow sneers;
And selfish cares with barren plough,
Not age, had lined his narrow brow,
And foul and cruel thoughts, which feed
Upon the withering life within,
Like vipers on some poisonous weed.
Whether his ill were death or sin
None knew, until he died indeed,
And then men owned they were the same.

Seven days within my chamber lay
That corse, and my babes made holiday;
At last, I told them what is death;
The eldest, with a kind of shame,
Came to my knees with silent breath,
And sate awe-stricken at my feet;
And soon the others left their play,
And sate there too. It is unmeet

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To shed on the brief flower of youth
The withering knowledge of the grave;
From me remorse then wrung that truth.
I could not bear the joy which gave
Too just a response to mine own.
In vain. I dared not feign a groan;
And in their artless looks I saw,
Between the mists of fear and awe,
That my own thought was theirs; and they
Expressed it not in words, but said,
Each in its heart, how every day
Will pass in happy work and play,
Now he is dead and gone away.

After the funeral all our kin
Assembled, and the will was read.
My friend, I tell thee, even the dead
Have strength, their putrid shrouds within,
To blast and torture. Those who live
Still fear the living, but a corse
Is merciless, and power doth give
To such pale tyrants half the spoil
He rends from those who groan and toil,
Because they blush not with remorse
Among their crawling worms. Behold,
I have no child! my tale grows old
With grief, and staggers: let it reach
The limits of my feeble speech,
And languidly at length recline
On the brink of its own grave and mine.

Thou knowestwhat a thing is Poverty
Among the fallen on evil days:
'Tis Crime, and Fear, and Infamy,
And houseless Want in frozen years

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Wandering ungarmented, and Pain,
And, worse than all, that inward stain
Foul Self-contempt, which drowns in sneers
Youth's starlight smile, and makes it, tears
First like hot gall, then dry for ever!
And well thou knowest a mother never
Could doom her children to this ill,
And well he knew the same. The will
Imported, that if e'er again
I sought my children to behold,
Or in my birth-place did remain
Beyond three days, whose hours were told,
They should inherit nought: and he,
To whom next came their patrimony,
A sallow lawyer, cruel and cold,
Aye watched me, as the will was read,
With eyes askance, which sought to see
The secrets of my agony;
And with close lips and anxious brow
Stood canvasing still to and fro
The chance of my resolve, and all
The dead man's caution just did call;
For in that killing lie 'twas said—
"She is adulterous, and doth hold
In secret that the Christian creed
Is false, and therefore is much need
That I should have a care to save
My children from eternal fire."
Friend, he was sheltered by the grave,
And therefore dared to be a liar!
In truth, the Indian on the pyre
Of her dead husband, half consumed,
As well might there be false, as I
To those abhorred embraces doomed,
Far worse than fire's brief agony.

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As to the Christian creed, if true
Or false, I never questioned it:
I took it as the vulgar do:
Nor my vext soul had leisure yet
To doubt the things men say, or deem
That they are other than they seem.

All present who those crimes did hear,
In feigned or actual scorn and fear,
Men, women, children, slunk away,
Whispering with self-contented pride,
Which half suspects its own base lie.
I spoke to none, nor did abide,
But silently I went my way,
Nor noticed I where joyously
Sate my two younger babes at play,
In the court-yard through which I past;
But went with footsteps firm and fast
Till I came to the brink of the ocean green,
And there, a woman with grey hairs,
Who had my mother's servant been,
Kneeling, with many tears and prayers,
Made me accept a purse of gold,
Half of the earnings she had kept
To refuge her when weak and old.

With woe, which never sleeps or slept,
I wander now. 'Tis a vain thought—
But on yon alp, whose snowy head
'Mid the azure air is islanded,
(We see it o'er the flood of cloud,
Which sunrise from its eastern caves
Drives, wrinkling into golden waves,
Hung with its precipices proud,

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From that grey stone where first we met)
There, now who knows the dead feel nought?
Should be my grave; for he who yet
Is my soul's soul, once said: "'Twere sweet
'Mid stars and lightnings to abide,
And winds and lulling snows, that beat
With their soft flakes the mountain wide,
When weary meteor lamps repose,
And languid storms their pinions close:
And all things strong and bright and pure,
And ever during, aye endure:
Who knows, if one were buried there,
But these things might our spirits make,
Amid the all-surrounding air,
Their own eternity partake?"
Then 'twas a wild and playful saying
At which I laughed, or seemed to laugh;
They were his words: now heed my praying,
And let them be my epitaph.
Thy memory for a term may be
My monument. Wilt remember me?
I know thou wilt, and canst forgive
Whilst in this erring world to live
My soul disdained not, that I thought
Its lying forms were worthy aught
And much less thee.

Helen. Oh speak not so,
But come to me and pour thy woe
Into this heart, full though it be,
Aye overflowing with its own;
I thought that grief had severed me
From all beside who weep and groan;
Its likeness upon earth to be,

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Its express image; but thou art
More wretched. Sweet! we will not part
Henceforth, if death be not division;
If so, the dead feel no contrition.
But wilt thou hear since last we parted
All that has left me broken hearted?

Ros. Yes, speak. The faintest stars are scarcely shorn
Of their thin beams by that delusive morn
Which sinks again in darkness, like the light
Of early love, soon lost in total night.

Helen. Alas! Italian winds are mild,
But my bosom is cold—wintry cold—
When the warm air weaves, among the fresh leaves,
Soft music, my poor brain is wild,
And I am weak like a nursling child,
Though my soul with grief is grey and old.

Ros. Weep not at thine own words, tho' they must make
Me weep. What is thy tale?

Helen. I fear 'twill shake
Thy gentle heart with tears. Thou well
Rememberest when we met no more,
And, though I dwelt with Lionel,
That friendless caution pierced me sore
With grief; a wound my spirit bore
Indignantly, but when he died
With him lay dead both hope and pride.

Alas! all hope is buried now.
But then men dreamed the aged earth
Was labouring in that mighty birth,

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Which many a poet and a sage
Has aye foreseen—the happy age
When truth and love shall dwell below
Among the works and ways of men;
Which on this world not power but will
Even now is wanting to fulfil.

Among mankind what thence befel
Of strife, how vain, is known too well;
When liberty's dear pæan fell
'Mid murderous howls. To Lionel,
Though of great wealth and lineage high,
Yet through those dungeon walls there came
Thy thrilling light, O liberty!
And as the meteor's midnight flame
Startles the dreamer, sun-like truth
Flashed on his visionary youth,
And filled him, not with love, but faith,
And hope, and courage mute in death;
For love and life in him were twins,
Born at one birth: in every other
First life then love its course begins,
Though they be children of one mother;
And so through this dark world they fleet
Divided, till in death they meet:
But he loved all things ever. Then
He past amid the strife of men,
And stood at the throne of armed power
Pleading for a world of woe:
Secure as one on a rock-built tower
O'er the wrecks which the surge trails to and fro.
'Mid the passions wild of human kind
He stood, like a spirit calming them;
For, it was said, his words could bind

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Like music the lulled crowd, and stem
That torrent of unquiet dream,
Which mortals truth and reason deem,
But is revenge and fear and pride.
Joyous he was; and hope and peace
On all who heard him did abide,
Raining like dew from his sweet talk,
As where the evening star may walk
Along the brink of the gloomy seas,
Liquid mists of splendour quiver.
His very gestures touched to tears
The unpersuaded tyrant, never
So moved before: his presence stung
The torturers with their victim's pain,
And none knew how; and through their ears
The subtle witchcraft of his tongue
Unlocked the hearts of those who keep
Gold, the world's bond of slavery.
Men wondered, and some sneered to see
One sow what he could never reap:
For he is rich, they said, and young,
And might drink from the depths of luxury.
If he seeks fame, fame never crowned
The champion of a trampled creed:
If he seeks power, power is enthroned
'Mid ancient rights and wrongs, to feed
Which hungry wolves with praise and spoil,
Those who would sit near power must toil;
And such, there sitting, all may see.
What seeks he? All that others seek
He casts away, like a vile weed
Which the sea casts unreturningly.
That poor and hungry men should break
The laws which wreak them toil and scorn,

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We understand; but Lionel
We know is rich and nobly born.
So wondered they: yet all men loved
Young Lionel, though few approved;
All but the priests, whose hatred fell
Like the unseen blight of a smiling day,
The withering honey dew, which clings
Under the bright green buds of May,
Whilst they unfold their emerald wings:
For he made verses wild and queer
On the strange things priests hold so dear,
Because they bring them land and gold.
Of devils and saints, and all such gear,
He made tales which whoso heard or read
Would laugh till he were almost dead.
So this grew a proverb: "don't get old
Till Lionel's 'banquet in hell' you hear,
And then you will laugh yourself young again."
So the priests hated him, and he
Repaid their hate with cheerful glee.
Ah, smiles and joyance quickly died,
For public hope grew pale and dim
In an altered time and tide,
And in its wasting withered him,
As a summer flower that blows too soon
Droops in the smile of the waning moon,
When it scatters through an April night
The frozen dews of wrinkling blight.
None now hoped more. Grey Power was seated
Safely on her ancestral throne;
And Faith, the Python, undefeated,
Even to its blood-stained steps dragged on
Her foul and wounded train, and men
Were trampled and deceived again,

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And words and shews again could bind
The wailing tribes of human kind
In scorn and famine. Fire and blood
Raged round the raging multitude,
To fields remote by tyrants sent
To be the scorned instrument
With which they drag from mines of gore
The chains their slaves yet ever wore;
And in the streets men met each other,
And by old altars and in halls,
And smiled again at festivals.
But each man found in his heart's brother
Cold cheer; for all, though half deceived,
The outworn creeds again believed,
And the same round anew began,
Which the weary world yet ever ran.

Many then wept, not tears, but gall
Within their hearts, like drops which fall
Wasting the fountain-stone away.
And in that dark and evil day
Did all desires and thoughts, that claim
Men's care—ambition, friendship, fame,
Love, hope, though hope was now despair—
Indue the colours of this change,
As from the all-surrounding air
The earth takes hues obscure and strange,
When storm and earthquake linger there.

And so, my friend, it then befel
To many, most to Lionel,
Whose hope was like the life of youth
Within him, and, when dead, became

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A spirit of unresting flame,
Which goaded him in his distress
Over the world's vast wilderness.
Three years he left his native land,
And on the fourth, when he returned
None knew him: he was stricken deep
With some disease of mind, and turned
Into aught unlike Lionel.
On him, on whom, did he pause in sleep,
Serenest smiles were wont to keep,
And, did he wake, a winged band
Of bright persuasions, which had fed
On his sweet lips and liquid eyes,
Kept their swift pinions half out spread,
To do on men his least command;
On him, whom once 'twas paradise
Even to behold, now misery lay:
In his own heart 'twas merciless,
To all things else none may express
Its innocence and tenderness.
'Twas said that he had refuge sought
In love from his unquiet thought
In distant lands, and been deceived
By some strange shew; for there were found,
Blotted with tears as those relieved
By their own words are wont to do,
These mournful verses on the ground,
By all who read them blotted too.

"How am I changed! my hopes were once like fire:
I loved, and I believed that life was love.
How am I lost! on wings of swift desire
Among Heaven's winds my spirit once did move.
I slept, and silver dreams did aye inspire

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My liquid sleep: I woke, and did approve
All nature to my heart, and thought to make
A paradise of earth for one sweet sake.

"I love, but I believe in love no more.
I feel desire, but hope not. Oh, from sleep
Most vainly must my weary brain implore
Its long lost flattery now: I wake to weep,
And sit through the long day gnawing the core
Of my bitter heart, and, like a miser, keep,
Since none in what I feel take pain or pleasure,
To my own soul its self-consuming treasure."

He dwelt beside me near the seat:
And oft in evening did we meet,
When the waves, beneath the starlight, flee
O'er the yellow sands with silver feet,
And talked: our talk was sad and sweet,
Till slowly from his mien there passed
The desolation which it spoke;
And smiles,—as when the lightning's blast
Has parched some heaven-delighting oak,
The next spring shews leaves pale and rare,
But like flowers delicate and fair,
On its rent boughs—again arrayed
His countenance in tender light:
His words grew subtile fire, which made
The air his hearers breathed delight:
His motions, like the winds, were free,
Which bend the bright grass gracefully,
Then fade away in circlets faint:
And winged hope, on which upborne
His soul seemed hovering in his eyes,
Like some bright spirit newly born

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Floating amid the sunny skies,
Sprang forth from his rent heart anew.
Yet o'er his talk, and looks, and mien,
Tempering their loveliness too keen,
Past woe its shadow backward threw,
Till like an exhalation, spread
From flowers half drunk with evening dew,
They did become infectious: sweet
And subtle mists of sense and thought:
Which wrapt us soon, when we might meet,
Almost from our own looks and aught
The wide world holds. And so, his mind
Was healed, while mine grew sick with fear:
For ever now his health declined,
Like some frail bark which cannot bear
The impulse of an altered wind,
Though prosperous: and my heart grew full
'Mid its new joy of a new care:
For his cheek became, not pale, but fair,
As rose-o'ershadowed lilies are;
And soon his deep and sunny hair,
In this alone less beautiful,
Like grass in tombs grew wild and rare.
The blood in his translucent veins
Beat, not like animal life, but love
Seemed now its sullen springs to move,
When life had failed, and all its pains:
And sudden sleep would seize him oft
Like death, so calm, but that a tear,
His pointed eye-lashes between,
Would gather in the light serene
Of smiles, whose lustre bright and soft
Beneath lay undulating there.
His breath was like inconstant flame,

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As eagerly it went and came;
And I hung o'er him in his sleep,
Till, like an image in the lake
Which rains disturb, my tears would break
The shadow of that slumber deep;
Then he would bid me not to weep,
And say with flattery false, yet sweet,
That death and he could never meet,
If I would never part with him.
And so we loved, and did unite
All that in us was yet divided:
For when he said, that many a rite,
By men to bind but once provided,
Could not be shared by him and me,
Or they would kill him in their glee,
I shuddered, and then laughing said—
"We will have rites our faith to bind,
But our church shall be the starry night,
Our altar the grassy earth outspread,
And our priest the muttering wind."

'Twas sunset as I spoke: one star
Had scarce burst forth, when from afar
The ministers of misrule sent
Seized upon Lionel, and bore
His chained limbs to a dreary tower,
In the midst of a city vast and wide.
For he, they said, from his mind had bent
Against their gods keen blasphemy,
For which, though his soul must roasted be
In hell's red lakes immortally,
Yet even on earth must he abide
The vengeance of their slaves: a trial,
I think, men call it. What avail

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Are prayers and tears, which chase denial
From the fierce savage, nursed in hate?
What the knit soul that pleading and pale
Makes wan the quivering cheek, which late
It painted with its own delight?
We were divided. As I could,
I stilled the tingling of my blood,
And followed him in their despite,
As a widow follows, pale and wild,
The murderers and corse of her only child;
And when we came to the prison door
And I prayed to share his dungeon floor
With prayers which rarely have been spurned,
And when men drove me forth and I
Stared with blank frenzy on the sky,
A farewell look of love he turned,
Half calming me; then gazed awhile,
As if thro' that black and massy pile,
And thro' the crowd around him there,
And thro' the dense and murky air,
And the thronged streets, he did espy
What poets know and prophecy;
And said, with voice that made them shiver
And clung like music in my brain,
And which the mute walls spoke again,
Prolonging it with deepened strain:
"Fear not, the tyrants shall rule for ever,
Or the priests of the bloody faith;
They stand on the brink of that mighty river,
Whose waves they have tainted with death;
It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams, and rages, and swells,
And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
Like wrecks in the surge of eternity."

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I dwelt beside the prison gate,
And the strange crowd that out and in
Passed, some, no doubt, with mine own fate,
Might have fretted me with its ceaseless din,
But the fever of care was louder within.
Soon, but too late, in penitence
Or fear, his foes released him thence;
I saw his thin and languid form,
As leaning on the jailer's arm,
Whose hardened eyes grew moist the while,
To meet his mute and faded smile,
And hear his words of kind farewell,
He tottered forth from his damp cell.
Many had never wept before,
From whom fast tears then gushed and fell;
Many will relent no more,
Who sobbed like infants then: aye, all
Who thronged the prison's stony hall,
The rulers or the slaves of law,
Felt with a new surprise and awe
That they were human, till strong shame
Made them again become the same.
The prison blood-hounds, huge and grim,
From human looks the infection caught,
And fondly crouched and fawned on him:
And men have heard the prisoners say,
Who in their rotting dungeons lay,
That from that hour, throughout one day,
The fierce despair and hate which kept
Their trampled bosoms almost slept:
When, like twin vultures, they hung feeding
On each heart's wound, wide torn and bleeding,
Because their jailers' rule, they thought,
Grew merciful, like a parent's sway.

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I know not how, but we were free:
And Lionel sate alone with me,
As the carriage drove thro' the streets apace;
And we looked upon each other's face;
And the blood in our fingers intertwined
Ran like the thoughts of a single mind,
As the swift emotions went and came
Thro' the veins of each united frame.
So thro' the long long streets we past
Of the million-peopled City vast;
Which is that desert, where each one
Seeks his mate yet is alone,
Beloved and sought and mourned of none;
Until the clear blue sky was seen,
And the grassy meadows bright and green,
And then I sunk in his embrace,
Enclosing there a mighty space
Of love: and so we travelled on
By woods, and fields of yellow flowers,
And towns, and villages, and towers,
Day after day of happy hours.
It was the azure time of June,
When the skies are deep in the stainless noon,
And the warm and fitful breezes shake
The fresh green leaves of the hedge-row briar,
And there were odours then to make
The very breath we did respire
A liquid element, whereon
Our spirits, like delighted things
That walk the air on subtile wings,
Floated and mingled far away,
'Mid the warm winds of the sunny day.
And when the evening star came forth
Above the curve of the new bent moon,

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And light and sound ebbed from the earth,
Like the tide of the full and weary sea
To the depths of its tranquillity,
Our natures to its own repose
Did the earth's breathless sleep attune:
Like flowers, which on each other close
Their languid leaves when day-light's gone,
We lay, till new emotions came,
Which seemed to make each mortal frame
One soul of interwoven flame,
A life in life, a second birth
In worlds diviner far than earth,
Which, like two strains of harmony
That mingle in the silent sky
Then slowly disunite, past by
And left the tenderness of tears,
A soft oblivion of all fears,
A sweet sleep: so we travelled on
Till we came to the home of Lionel,
Among the mountains wild and lone,
Beside the hoary western sea,
Which near the verge of the echoing shore
The massy forest shadowed o'er.

The ancient steward, with hair all hoar,
As we alighted, wept to see
His master changed so fearfully;
And the old man's sobs did waken me
From my dream of unremaining gladness;
The truth flashed o'er me like quick madness
When I looked, and saw that there was death
On Lionel: yet day by day
He lived, till fear grew hope and faith,

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And in my soul I dared to say,
Nothing so bright can pass away:
Death is dark, and foul, and dull,
But he is—O how beautiful!
Yet day by day he grew more weak,
And his sweet voice, when he might speak,
Which ne'er was loud, became more low;
And the light which flashed through his waxen cheek
Grew faint, as the rose—like hues which flow
From sunset o'er the Alpine snow:
And death seemed not like death in him,
For the spirit of life o'er every limb
Lingered, a mist of scene and thought.
When the summer wind faint odours brought
From mountain flowers, even as it passed
His cheek would change, as the noon-day sea
Which the dying breeze sweeps fitfully.
If but a cloud the sky o'ercast,
You might see his colour come and go,
And the softest strain of music made
Sweet smiles, yet sad, arise and fade
Amid the dew of his tender eyes:
And the breath, with intermitting flow,
Made his pale lips quiver and part.
You might hear the beatings of his heart,
Quick, but not strong, and with my tresses
When oft he playfully would bind
In the bowers of mossy lonelinesses
His neck, and win me so to mingle
In the sweet depth of woven caresses,
And our faint limbs were intertwined,
Alas! the unquiet life did tingle
From mine own heart through every vein,
Like a captive in dreams of liberty,

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Who beats the walls of his stony cell.
But his, it seemed already free,
Like the shadow of fire surrounding me!
On my faint eyes and limbs did dwell
That spirit as it passed, till soon,
As a frail cloud wandering o'er the moon,
Beneath its light invisible,
Is seen when it folds its grey wings again
To alight on midnight's dusky plain,
I lived and saw, and the gathering soul
Passed from beneath that strong controul,
And I fell on a life which was sick with fear
Of all the woe that now I bear.

Amid a bloomless myrtle wood,
On a green and sea-girt promontory,
Not far from where we dwelt, there stood
In record of a sweet sad story,
An altar and a temple bright
Circled by steps, and o'er the gate
Was sculptured, "To Fidelity;"
And in the shrine an image sate,
All veiled: but there was seen the light
Of smiles, which faintly could express
A mingled pain and tenderness
Through that ethereal drapery.
The left hand held the head, the right—
Beyond the veil, beneath the skin,
You might see the nerves quivering within—
Was forcing the point of a barbed dart
Into its side-convulsing heart.
An unskilled hand, yet one informed
With genius, had the marble warmed
With that pathetic life. This tale
It told: A dog had from the sea,

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When the tide was raging fearfully,
Dragged Lionel's mother, weak and pale,
Then died beside her on the sand,
And she that temple thence had planned;
But it was Lionel's own hand
Had wrought the image. Each new moon
That lady did, in this lone fane,
The rites of a religion sweet,
Whose god was in her heart and brain:
The seasons' loveliest flowers were strewn
On the marble floor beneath her feet,
And she brought crowns of sea-buds white,
Whose odour is so sweet and faint,
And weeds, like branching chrysolyte,
Woven in devices fine and quaint,
And tears from her brown eyes did stain
The altar: need but look upon
That dying statue, fair and wan,
If tears should cease, to weep again:
And rare Arabian odours came,
Though the myrtle copses steaming thence
From the hissing frankincense,
Whose smoke, wool-white as ocean foam,
Hung in dense flocks beneath the dome,
That ivory dome, whose azure night
With golden stars, like heaven, was bright
O'er the split cedars pointed flame;
And the lady's harp would kindle there
The melody of an old air
Softer than sleep; the villagers
Mixt their religion up with her's,
And, as they listened round, shed tears.

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One eve he led me to this fane:
Daylight on its last purple cloud
Was lingering grey, and soon her strain
The nightingale began; now loud,
Climbing in circles the windless sky,
Now dying music; suddenly
'Tis scattered in a thousand notes,
And now to the hushed ear it floats
Like field smells known in infancy,
Then failing, soothes the air again.
We sate within that temple lone,
Pavilioned round with Parian stone:
His mother's harp stood near, and oft
I had awakened music soft
Amid its wires: the nightingale
Was pausing in her heaven-taught tale:
"Now drain the cup," said Lionel,
"Which the poet-bird has crowned so well
With the wine of her bright and liquid song!
Heardst thou not sweet words among
That heaven-resounding minstresly?
Heardst thou not, that those who die
Awake in a world of extacy?
That love, when limbs are interwoven,
And sleep, when the night of life is cloven,
And thought, to the world's dim boundaries clinging,
And music, when one beloved is singing,
Is death? Let us drain right joyously
The cup which the sweet bird fills for me."
He paused, and to my lips he bent
His own: like spirit his words went
Through all my limbs with the speed of fire;
And his keen eyes, glittering through mine
Filled me with the flame divine,

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Which in their orbs was burning far,
Like the light of an unmeasured star,
In the sky of midnight dark and deep:
Yes, 'twas his soul that did inspire
Sounds, which my skill could ne'er awaken;
And first, I felt my fingers sweep
The harp, and a long quivering cry
Burst from my lips in symphony:
The dusk and solid air was shaken,
As swift and swifter the notes came
From my touch, that wandered like quick flame,
And from my bosom, labouring
With some unutterable thing:
The awful sound of my own voice made
My faint lips tremble, in some mood
Of worldless thought Lionel stood
So pale, that even beside his cheek
The snowy column from its shade
Caught whiteness: yet his countenance,
Raised upward, burned with radiance
Of spirit-piercing joy, whose light,
Like the moon struggling through the night
Of whirlwind-rifted clouds, did break
With beams that might not be confined.
I paused, but soon his gestures kindled
New power, as by the moving wind
The waves are lifted, and my song
To low soft notes now changed and dwindled,
And from the twinkling wires among
My languid fingers drew and flung
Circles of life dissolving sound,
Yet faint: in aery rings they bound
My Lionel, who, as every strain

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Grew fainter but more sweet, his mien
Sunk with the sound relaxedly;
And slowly now he turned to me,
As slowly faded from his face
That awful joy: with looks serene
He was soon drawn to my embrace,
And my wild song then died away
In murmurs: words, I dare not say
We mixed, and on his lips mine fed
Till they methought felt still and cold:
"What is it with thee, love?" I said:
No word, no look, no motion! yes,
There was a change, but spare to guess,
Nor let that moment's hope be told.
I looked, and knew that he was dead,
And fell, as the eagle on the plain
Falls when life deserts her brain,
And the mortal lightning is veiled again.

Oh that I were now dead! but such
Did they not, love, demand too much
Those dying murmurs? He forbade.
Oh that I once again were mad!
And yet, dear Rosalind, not so,
For I would live to share thy woe.
Sweet boy, did I forget thee too?
Alas, we know not what we do
When we speak words.

No memory more
Is in my mind of that sea shore.
Madness came on me, and a troop
Of misty shapes did seem to sit

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Besides me on a vessel's poop,
And the clear north wind was driving it.
Then I heard strange tongues, and saw strange flowers
And the stars methought grew unlike ours,
And the azure sky and the stormless sea
Made me believe that I had died,
And waked in a world, which was to me
Drear hell, though heaven to all beside:
Then a dead sleep fell on my mind,
Whilst animal life many long years
Had rescued from a chasm of tears;
And when I woke, I wept to find
That the same lady, bright and wise,
With silver locks and quick brown eyes,
The mother of my Lionel,
Had tended me in my distress,
And died some months before. Nor less
Wonder, but far more peace and joy
Brought in that hour my lovely boy;
For through that trance my soul had well
The impress of thy being kept:
And if I waked, or if I slept,
No doubt, though memory faithless be,
Thy image ever dwelt on me;
And thus, O Lionel, like thee
Is our sweet child. 'Tis sure most strange
I knew not of so great a change,
As that which gave him birth, who now
Is all the solace of my woe.

That Lionel great wealth had left
By will to me, and that of all
The ready lies of law bereft,
My child and me might well befall.

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But let me think not of the scorn,
Which from the meanest I have borne,
When, for my child's beloved sake,
I mixed with slaves, to vindicate
The very laws themselves do make:
Let me not say scorn is my fate,
Lest I be proud, suffering the same
With those who live in deathless fame.
She ceased.—"Lo, where red morning thro' the woods
Is burning o'er the dew;" said Rosalind.
And with these words they rose, and towards the flood
Of the blue lake, beneath the leaves now wind
With equal steps and fingers intertwined:
Thence to a lonely dwelling, where the shore
Is shadowed with steep rocks, and cypresses
Cleave with their dark green cones the silent skies,
And with their shadows the clear depths below,
And where a little terrace from its bowers,
Of blooming myrtle and faint lemon-flowers,
Scatters its sense-dissolving fragrance o'er
The liquid marble of the windless lake;
And where the aged forest's limbs look hoar,
Under the leaves which their green garments make,
They come: 'tis Helen's home, and clean and white,
Like one which tyrants spare on our own land
In some such solitude, its casements bright
Shone thro' their vine-leaves in the morning sun,
And even within 'twas scarce like Italy.
And when she saw how all things there were planned,
As in an English home, dim memory
Disturbed poor Rosalind: she stood as one
Whose mind is where his body cannot be,
Till Helen led her where her child yet slept,
And said, "Observe, that brow was Lionel's,

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Those lips were his, and so he ever kept
One arm in sleep, pillowing his head with it.
You cannot see his eyes, they are two wells
Of liquid love: let us not wake him yet."
But Rosalind could bear no more, and wept
A shower of burning tears, which fell upon
His face, and so his opening lashes shone
With tears unlike his own, as he did leap
In sudden wonder from his innocent sleep.

So Rosalind and Helen lived together
Thenceforth, changed in all else, yet friends again,
Such as they were, when o'er the mountain heather
They wandered in their youth, thro' sun and rain.
And after many years, for human things
Change even like the ocean and the wind,
Her daughter was restored to Rosalind,
And in their circle thence some visitings
Of joy 'mid their new calm would intervene:
A lovely child she was, of looks serene,
And motions which o'er things indifferent shed
The grace and gentleness from whence they came.
And Helen's boy grew with her, and they fed
From the same flowers of thought, until each mind
Like springs which mingle in one flood became,
And in their union soon their parents saw
The shadow of the peace denied to them.
And Rosalind, for when the living stem
Is cankered in its heart, the tree must fall,
Died ere her time; and with deep grief and awe
The pale survivors followed her remains
Beyond the region of dissolving rains,
Up the cold mountain she was wont to call
Her tomb; and on Chiavenna's precipice
They raised a pyramid of lasting ice,

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Whose polished sides, ere day had yet begun,
Caught the first glow of the unrisen sun,
The last, when it had sunk ; and thro' the night
The charioteers of Arctos wheeled round
Its glittering point, as seen from Helen's home,
Whose sad inhabitants each year would come,
With willing steps climbing that rugged height,
And hang long locks of hair, and garlands bound
With amaranth flowers, which, in the clime's despite,
Filled the frore air with unaccustomed light;
Such flowers, as in the wintry memory bloom
Of one friend left, adorned that frozen tomb.

Helen, whose spirit was of softer mould,
Whose sufferings too were less, death slowlier led
Into the peace of his dominion cold :
She died among her kindred, being old.
And know, that if love die not in the dead
As in the living, none of mortal kind
Are blest as Helen now and Rosalind.

END OF ROSALIND AND HELEN.

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HYMN

TO INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY.

THE awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats tho' unseen among us; visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower;
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening,
Like clouds in starlight widely spread,
Like memory of music fled,
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.——
Spirit of BEAUTY, that dost conscerate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form, where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away, and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not for ever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain river;
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown;
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom, why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope?
No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
To sage or poet these responses given:
Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost, and Heaven,
Remain the records of their vain endeavour:
Frail spells, whose uttered charm might not avail to sever,
From all we hear and all we see,
Doubt, chance, and mutability.
The light alone, like mist o'er mountains driven,
Or music by the night wind sent

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Thro' strings of some still instrument,
Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.——
Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds, depart
And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.
Thou messenger of sympathies
That wax and wane in lovers' eyes;
Thou, that to human thought are nourishment,
Like darkness to a dying flame!
Depart not as thy shadow came:
Depart not, least the grave should be,
Like life and fear, a dark reality.——
While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
Thro' many a listening chamber, cave, and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed:
I was not heard: I saw them not:
When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds and blossoming,
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me:
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in extacy!
I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine: have I not kept the vow?
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave: they have in visioned bowers
Of studious zeal or loves delight
Outwatched with me the envious night:

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They know that never joy illumed my brow,
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery,
That thou, O awful LOVELINESS,
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past: there is a harmony
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which thro' the summer is not heard nor seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth
Descended, to my onward life supply
Its calm, to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, SPIRIT fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.

SONNET.—OZYMANDIAS.

I MET a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

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EPIPSYCHIDION:

VERSES ADDRESSED TO THE NOBLE

AND UNFORTUNATE LADY

EMILIA V*****

NOW IMPRISONED IN THE CONVENT OF ——

L'anima amante si slancia fuori del creato, e si crea nel infinito un Mondo tutto per essa, diverso assai da questo oscuro e pauroso baratro.

Her own words.

LONDON:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY JOHN ASCHAM, 71, CHANCERY LANE, HOLBORN, AND SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1834.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Writer of the following Lines died at Florence, as he was preparing for a voyage to one of the wildest of the Sporades, which he had bought, and where he had fitted up the ruins of an old building, and where it was his hope to have realised a scheme of life, suited perhaps to that happier and better world of which he is now an inhabitant, but hardly practicable in this. His life was singular; less on account of the romantic vicissitudes which diversified it, than the ideal tinge which it received from his own character and feelings. The present Poem, like the Vita Nuova of Dante, is sufficiently intelligible to a certain class of readers without a matter-of-fact history of the circumstances to which it relates; and to a certain other class it must ever remain incomprehensible, from a defect of a common organ of perception for the ideas of which it treats. Not but that, *gran vergogna sarebbe a colui, che rimasse cosa sotto veste di figura, o di colore rettorico: e domandato non sapesse denudare le sue parole da cotal veste, in guisa che avessero verace intendimento.*

The present poem appears to have been intended by the Writer as the dedication to some longer one. The stanza on the opposite page is almost a literal translation from Dante's famous Canzone

Voi ch' intendendo, il terzo ciel movete, &c.

The presumptuous application of the concluding lines to his own composition will raise a smile at the expense of my unfortunate friend: be it a smile not of contempt, but pity.

S.

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My Song, I fear that thou wilt find but few
Who fitly shall conceive thy reasoning,
Of such hard matter dost thou entertain;
Whence, if by misadventure, chance should bring
Thee to base company, (as chance may do)
Quite unware of what thou dost contain,
I prithee, comfort thy sweet self again,
My last delight! tell them that they are dull,
And bid them own that thou art beautiful.

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EPIPSYCHIDION.

Sweet Spirit! Sister of that orphan one,
Whose empire is the name thou weepest on,
In my heart's temple I suspend to thee
These votive wreaths of withered memory.

Poor captive bird! who, from thy narrow cage,
Pourest such music, that it might assuage
The rugged hearts of those who prisoned thee,
Were they not deaf to all sweet melody;
This song shall be thy rose: its petals pale
Are dead, indeed, my adored Nightingale!
But soft and fragrant is the faded blossom,
And it has no thorn left to wound thy bosom.

High, spirit-winged Heart! who dost for ever
Beat thine unfeeling bars with vain endeavour,
Till those bright plumes of thought, in which arrayed
It over-soared this low and worldly shade,
Lie shattered; and thy panting wounded breast
Stains with dear blood its unmaternal nest!
I weep vain tears: blood would less bitter be,
Yet poured forth gladlier, could it profit thee.

Seraph of Heaven! too gentle to be human,
Veiling beneath that radiant form of Woman
All that is insupportable in thee
Of light, and love, and immortality!
Sweet Benediction in the eternal Curse!
Veiled Glory of this lampless Universe!
Thou Moon beyond the clouds! Thou living Form

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Among the Dead ! Thou Star above the Storm !
Thou Wonder, and thou Beauty, and thou Terror !
Thou Harmony of Nature's art ! Thou Mirror
In whom, as in the splendour of the Sun,
All shapes look glorious which thou gazest on !
Ay, even the dim words which obscure thee now
Flash, lightning-like, with unaccustomed glow ;
I pray thee that thou blot from this sad song
All of its much mortality and wrong,
With those clear drops, which start like sacred dew
From the twin lights thy sweet soul darkens through,
Weeping, till sorrow becomes ecstasy:
Then smile on it, so that it may not die.

I never thought before my death to see
Youth's vison thus made perfect : Emily,
I love thee; though the world by no thin name
Will hide that love, from its unvalued shame.
Would we two had been twins of the same mother !
Or, that the name my heart lent to another
Could be a sister's bond for her and thee,
Blending two beams of one eternity !
Yet were one lawful and the other true,
These names, though dear, could paint not, as is due,
How beyond refuge I am thine. Ah me !
I am not thine: I am a part of *thee.*

Sweet Lamp ! my moth-like Muse has burnt its wings
Or, like a dying swan who soars and sings,
Young Love should teach Time, in his own grey style,
All that thou art. Art thou not void of guile,
A lovely soul formed to be blest and bless ?
A well of sealed and secret happiness,
Whose waters like blithe light and music are,

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Vanquishing dissonance and gloom? A Star
Which moves not in the moving Heavens, alone?
A smile amid dark frowns? a gentle tone
Amid rude voices? a beloved light?
A Solitude, a Refuge, a Delight?
A lute, which those whom love has taught to play
Make music on, to soothe the roughest day
And lull fond grief asleep? a buried treasure?
A cradle of young thoughts of wingless pleasure?
A violet-shrouded grave of Woe?— I measure
The world of fancies, seeking one like thee,
And find—alas! mine own infirmity.

She met me, Stranger, upon life's rough way,
And lured me towards sweet Death; as Night by Day,
Winter by Spring, or Sorrow by swift Hope,
Led into light, life, peace. An antelope,
In the suspended impulse of its lightness,
Were less ethereally light: the brightness
Of her divinest presence trembles through
Her limbs, as underneath a cloud of dew
Embodied in the windless Heaven of June
Amid the splendour-winged stars, the Moon
Burns, inextinguishably beautiful:
And from her lips, as from a hyacinth full
Of honey-dew, a liquid murmur drops,
Killing the sense with passion; sweet as stops
Of planetary music heard in trance.
In her mild lights the starry spirits dance,
The sun-beams of those wells which ever leap
Under the lightnings of the soul—too deep
For the brief fathom-line of thought or sense.
The glory of her being, issuing thence,
Stains the dead, blank, cold air with a warm shade

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Of unentangled intermixture, made
By Love, of light and motion; one intense
Diffusion, one serene Omnipresence,
Whose flowing outlines mingle in their flowing
Around her cheeks and utmost fingers glowing
With the unintermitted blood, which there
Quivers, (as in a fleece of snow-like air
The crimson pulse of living morning quiver,)
Continuously prolonged, and ending never,
Till they are lost, and in that Beauty furled
Which penetrates and clasps and fills the world;
Scarce visible from extreme loveliness.
Warm fragrance seems to fall from her light dress,
And her loose hair; and where some heavy tress
The air of her own speed has disentwined,
The sweetness seems to satiate the faint wind;
And in the soul a wild odour is felt,
Beyond the sense, like fiery dews that melt
Into the bosom of a frozen bud.—
See where she stands! a mortal shape indued
With love and life and light and deity,
And motion which may change but cannot die;
An image of some bright Eternity;
A shadow of some golden dream; a Splendour
Leaving the third sphere pilotless; a tender
Reflection of the eternal Moon of Love
Under whose motions life's dull billows move;
A Metaphor of Spring and Youth and Morning;
A Vison like incarnate April, warning,
With smiles and tears, Frost the Anatomy
Into his summer grave.

Ah! woe is me!
What have I dared? where am I lifted? how

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Shall I descend, and perish not? I know
That Love makes all things equal: I have heard
By mine own heart this joyous truth averred:
The spirit of the worm beneath the sod
In love and worship, blends itself with God.

Spouse! Sister! Angel! Pilot of the Fate
Whose course has been so starless! O too late
Beloved! O too soon adored, by me!
For in the fields of immortality
My spirit should at first have worshipped thine,
A divine presence in a place divine;
Or should have moved beside it on this earth,
A shadow of that substance, from its birth;
But not as now:—I love thee; yes, I feel
That on the fountain of my heart a seal
Is set, too keep its waters pure and bright
For thee, since in those *tears* thou hast delight.
We—are we not formed, as notes of music are,
For one another, though dissimilar;
Such difference without discord, as can make
Those sweetest sounds, in which all spirits shake
As trembling leaves in a continuous air?

Thy wisdom speaks in me, and bids me dare
Beacon the rocks on which high hearts are wreckt.
I never was attached to that great sect,
Whose doctrine is, that each one should select
Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,
And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend
To cold oblivion, though it is in the code
Of modern morals, and the beaten road
Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread,
Who travel to their home among the dead

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By the broad highway of the world, and so
With one chained friend, perhaps a jealous foe,
The dreariest and the longest journey go.

True Love in this differs from gold and clay,
That to divide is not to take away.
Love is like understanding, that grows bright,
Gazing on many truths; 'tis like thy light,
Imagination! which, from earth and sky,
And from the depths of human phantasy,
As from a thousand prisms and mirrors, fills
The Universe with glorious beams, and kills
Error, the worm, with many a sun-like arrow
Of its reverberated lightning. Narrow
The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates,
The life that wears, the spirit that creates
One object, and one form, and builds thereby
A sepulchre for its eternity.

Mind from its object differs most in this:
Evil from good; misery from happiness;
The baser from the nobler; the impure
And frail, from what is clear and must endure.
If you divide suffering and dross, you may
Diminish till it is consumed away;
If you divide pleasure and love and thought,
Each part exceeds the whole; and we know not
How much, while any yet remains unshared,
Of pleasure may be gained, of sorrow spared:
This truth is that deep well, whence sages draw
The unenvied light of hope; the eternal law
By which those live, to whom this world of life
Is a garden ravaged, and whose strife

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Tills for the promise of a later birth
The wilderness of this Elysian earth.

There was a Being whom my spirit oft
Met on its visioned wanderings, far aloft,
In the clear golden prime of my youth's dawn,
Upon the fairy isles of sunny lawn,
Amid the enchanted mountains, and the caves
Of divine sleep, and on the air-like waves
Of wonder-level dream, whose tremulous floor
Paved her light steps;—on an imagined shore,
Under the grey beak of some promontory
She met me, robed in such exceeding glory,
That I beheld her not. In solitudes
Her voice came to me through the whispering woods,
And from the fountains, and the odours deep
Of flowers, which, like lips murmuring in their sleep
Of the sweet kisses which had lulled them there,
Breathed but of *her* to the enamoured air;
And from the breezes whether low or loud,
And from the rain of every passing cloud,
And from the singing of the summer-birds,
And from all sounds, all silence. In the words
Of antique verse and high romance,—in form,
Sound, colour—in whatever checks that Storm
Which with the shattered present chokes the past;
And in that best philosophy, whose taste
Makes this cold common hell, our life, a doom
As glorious as a fiery martyrdom;
Her Spirit was the harmony of truth.—

Then, from the caverns of my dreamy youth
I sprang, as one sandalled with plumes of fire,
And towards the loadstar of my one desire,

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I flitted, like a dizzy moth, whose flight
Is as a dead leaf's in the owlet light,
When it would seek in Hesper's setting sphere
A radiant death, a fiery sepulchre,
As if it were a lamp of earthly flame.—
But She, whom prayers or tears then could not tame,
Past, like a God throned on a winged planet,
Whose burning plumes to tenfold swiftness fan it,
Into the deary cone of our life's shade;
And as a man with mighty loss dismayed,
I would have followed, though the grave between
Yawned like a gulf whose spectres are unseen:
When a voice said:—"O Thou of hearts the weakest,
The phantom is beside thee whom thou seekest."
Then I—"where?" the world's echo answered "where!"
And in that silence, and in my despair,
I questioned every tongueless wind that flew
Over my tower of mourning, if it knew
Whither 'twas fled, this soul out of my soul;
And murmured names and spells which have controul
Over the sightless tyrants of our fate;
But neither prayer nor verse could dissipate
The night which closed on her; nor uncreate
That world within this Chaos, mine and me,
Of which she was the veiled Divinity,
The world I say of thoughts that worshipped her:
And therefore I went forth, with hope and fear
And every gentle passion sick to death,
Feeding my course with expectation's breath,
Into the wintry forest of our life;
And struggling through its error with vain strife,
And stumbling in my weakness and my haste,
And half bewildered by new forms, I past
Seeking among those untaught foresters

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If I could find one form resembling hers,
In which she might have masked herself from me.
There,—One, whose voice was venomed melody
Sate by a well, under blue night-shade bowers;
The breath of her false mouth was like faint flowers,
Her touch was as electric poison,—flame
Out of her looks into my vitals came,
And from her living cheeks and bosom flew
A killing air, which pierced like honey-dew
Into the core of my green heart, and lay
Upon its leaves; until, as hair grown grey
O'er a young brow, they hid its unblown prime
With ruins of unseasonable time.

In many mortal forms I rashly sought
The shadow of that idol of my thought.
And some were fair—but beauty dies away:
Others were wise—but honeyed words betray:
And One was true—oh! why not true to me?
Then, as a hunted deer that could not flee,
I turned upon my thoughts, and stood at bay,
Wounded and weak and panting; the cold day
Trembled, for pity of my strife and pain,
When, like a noon-day dawn, there shone again
Deliverance. One stood on my path who seemed
As like the glorious shape which I had dreamed,
As is the Moon, whose changes ever run
Into themselves, to the eternal Sun;
The cold chaste Moon, the Queen of Heaven's bright isles,
Who makes all beautiful on which she smiles.
That wandering shrine of soft yet icy flame
Which ever is transformed, yet still the same,
And warms not but illumines. Young and fair
As the descended Spirit of that sphere,

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She hid me, as the Moon may hide the night
From its own darkness, until all was bright
Between the Heaven and Earth of my calm mind,
And, as a cloud charioted by the wind,
She led me to a cave in that wild place,
And sate beside me, with her downward face
Illumining my slumbers, like the Moon
Waxing and waning o'er Endymion.
And I was laid asleep, spirit and limb,
And all my being became bright or dim
As the Moon's image in a summer sea,
According as she smiled or frowned on me;
And there I lay, within a chaste cold bed:
Alas, I then was nor alive nor dead:—
For at her silver voice came Death and Life,
Unmindful each of their accustomed strife,
Masked like twin babes, a sister and a brother,
The wandering hopes of one abandoned mother,
And through the cavern without wings they flew,
And cried "Away, he is not of our crew."
I wept, and though it be a dream, I weep,

What storms then shook the ocean of my sleep,
Blotting that Moon, whose pale and waning lips
Then shrank as in the sickness of eclipse;—
And how my soul was as a lampless sea,
And who was then its Tempest; and when She,
The Planet of that hour, was quenched, what frost
Crept o'er those waters, 'till from coast to coast
The moving billows of my being fell
Into a death of ice, immoveable;—
And then—what earthquakes made it gape and split,
The white Moon smiling all the while on it,

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These words conceal:—If not, each word would be
The key of staunchless tears. Weep not for me!

At length, into the obscure Forest came
The vision I had sought through grief and shame.
Athwart that wintry wilderness of thorns
Flashed from her motion splendour like the Morn's,
And from her presence life was radiated
Through the grey earth and branches bare and dead;
So that her way was paved, and roofed above
With flowers as soft as thoughts of budding love;
And music from her respiration spread
Like light,—all other sounds were penetrated
By the small, still, sweet spirit of that sound,
So that the savage winds hung mute around;
And odours warm and fresh fell from her hair
Dissolving the dull cold in the froze air:
Soft as an Incarnation of the Sun,
When light is changed to love, this glorious One
Floated into the cavern where I lay,
And called my Spirit, and the dreaming clay
Was lifted by the thing that dreamed below
As smoke by fire, and in her beauty's glow
I stood, and felt the dawn of my long night
Was penetrating me with living light:
I knew it was the Vision veiled from me
So many years—that it was Emily.

Thin Spheres of light who rule this passive Earth,
This world of love, this *me*; and into birth
Awaken all its fruits and flowers, and dart
Magnetic might into its central heart;
And lift its billows and its mists, and guide
By everlasting laws each wind and tide

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To its fit cloud, and its appointed cave;
And lull its storms, each in the craggy grave
Which was its cradle, luring to faint bowers
The armies of the rain-bow-winged showers;
And, as those married lights, which from the towers
Of Heaven look forth and fold the wandering globe
In liquid sleep and splendour, as a robe;
And all their many-mingled influence blend,
If equal, yet unlike, to one sweet end;—
So ye, bright regents, with alternate sway
Govern my sphere of being, night and day!
Thou, not disdaining even a borrowed might;
Thou, not eclipsing a remoter light;
And, through the shadow of the seasons three,
From Spring to Autumn's sere maturity,
Light it into the Winter of the tomb,
Where it may ripen to a brighter bloom.
Thou too, O Comet beautiful and fierce,
Who drew the heart of this frail Universe
Towards thine own; till, wreckt in that convulsion,
Alternating attraction and repulsion,
Thine went astray and that was rent in twain;
Oh, float into our azure heaven again!
Be there love's folding-star at thy return;
The living Sun will feed thee from its urn
Of golden fire; the Moon will veil her horn
In thy last smiles; adoring Even and Morn
Will worship thee with incense of calm breath
And lights and shadows; as the star of Death
And Birth is worshiped by those sisters wild
Called Hope and Fear—upon the heart are piled
Their offerings,—of this sacrifice divine
A World shall be the altar.

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Lady mine,
Scorn not these flowers of thought, the fading birth
Which from its heart of hearts that plant puts forth
Whose fruit, made perfect by thy sunny eyes,
Will be as of the trees of Paradise.

The day is come, and thou wilt fly with me.
To whatsoe'er of dull mortality
Is mine, remain a vestal sister still;
To the intense, the deep, the imperishable,
Not mine but me, henceforth be thou united
Even as a bride, delighting and delighted.
The hour is come:—the destined Star has risen
Which shall descend upon a vacant prison.
The walls are high, the gates are strong, thick set
The sentinels—but true love never yet
Was thus constrained: it overleaps all fence:
Like lightning, with invisible violence
Piercing its continents; like Heaven's free breath,
Which he who grasps can hold not; liker Death,
Who rides upon a thought, and makes his way
Through temple, tower, and palace, and the array
Of arms: more strength has Love than he or they;
For it can burst his charnel, and make free
The limbs in chains, the heart in agony,
The soul in dust and chaos.

Emily,
A ship is floating in the harbour now,
A wind is hovering o'er the mountain's brow;
There is a path on the sea's azure floor,
No keel has ever ploughed that path before;
The halcyons brood around the foamless isles;
The treacherous Ocean has forsworn its wiles;

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The merry mariners are bold and free:
Say, my heart's sister, wilt thou sail with me?
Our bark is as an albatross, whose nest
Is a far Eden of the purple East;
And we between her wings will sit, while Night,
And Day, and Storm, and Calm, pursue their flight,
Our ministers, along the boundless Sea,
Treading each other's heels, unheededly.
It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise,
And, for the harbours are not safe and good,
This land would have remained a solitude
But for some pastoral people native there,
Who from the Elysian, clear, and golden air
Draw the last spirit of the age of gold,
Simple and spirited; innocent and bold.
The blue Ægean girds this chosen home,
With ever-changing sound and light and foam,
Kissing the sifted sands, and caverns hoar;
And all the winds wandering along the shore
Undulate with the undulating tide:
There are thick woods where sylvan forms abide;
And many a fountain, rivulet, and pond,
As clear as elemental diamond,
Or serene morning air; and far beyond,
The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer
(Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year,)
Pierce into glades, caverns, and bowers, and halls
Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls
Illumining, with sound that never fails
Accompany the noon-day nightingales;
And all the place is peopled with sweet airs;
The light clear element which the isle wears

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Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,
Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers,
And falls upon the eye-lids like faint sleep;
And from the moss violets and jonquils peep,
And dart their arrowy odour through the brain
'Till you might faint with that delicious pain.
And every motion, odour, beam, and tone,
With that deep music is in unison:
Which is a soul within the soul—they seem
Like echoes of an antenatal dream.—
It is an isle 'twixt Heaven, Air, Earth, and Sea,
Cradled, and hung in clear tranquillity;
Bright as that wandering Eden Lucifer,
Washed by the soft blue Oceans of young air.
It is a favoured place. Famine or Blight,
Pestilence, War and Earthquake, never light
Upon its mountain-peaks; blind vultures, they
Sail onward far upon their fatal way:
The winged storms, chaunting their thunder-psalm
To other lands, leave azure chasms of calm
Over this isle, or weep themselves in dew,
From which its fields and woods ever renew
Their green and golden immortality.
And from the sea there rise, and from the sky
There fall, clear exhalations, soft and bright,
Veil after veil, each hiding some delight.
Which Sun or Moon or zephyr draw aside,
Till the isle's beauty, like a naked bride
Glowing at once with love and loveliness,
Blushes and trembles at its own excess:
Yet, like a buried lamp, a Soul no less
Burns in the heart of this delicious isle,
An atom of th' Eternal, whose own smile
Unfolds itself, and may be felt not seen

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O'er the grey rocks, blue waves, and forests green,
Filling their bare and void interstices.—
But the chief marvel of the wilderness
Is a lone dwelling, built by whom or how
None of the rustic island-people know:
'Tis not a tower of strength, though with its height
It overtops the woods; but, for delight,
Some wise and tender Ocean-King, ere crime
Had been invented, in the world's young prime,
Reared it, a wonder of that simple time,
An envy of the isles, a pleasure-house
Made sacred to his sister and his spouse.
It scarce seems now a wreck of human art,
But, as it were, Titanic; in the heart
Of Earth having assumed its form, then grown
Out of the mountains, from the living stone,
Lifting itself in caverns light and high:
For all the antique and learned imagery
Has been erased, and in the place of it
The ivy and the wild-vine interknit
The volumes of their many twining stems;
Parasite flowers illume with dewy gems
The lampless halls, and when they fade, the sky
Peeps through their winter-woof of tracery
With moonlight patches, or star atoms keen,
Or fragments of the day's intense serene;—
Working mosaic on their Parian floors.
And, day and night, aloof, from the high towers
And terraces, the Earth and Ocean seem
To sleep in one another's arms, and dream
Of waves, flowers, clouds, woods, rocks, and all that we
Read in their smiles, and call reality.

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This isle and house are mine, and I have vowed
Thee to be lady of the solitude.—
And I have fitted up some chambers there
Looking towards the golden Eastern air,
And level with the living winds, which flow
Like waves above the living waves below.—
I have sent books and music there, and all
Those instruments with which high spirits call
The future from its cradle, and the past
Out of its grave, and make the present last
In thoughts and joys which sleep, but cannot die,
Folded within their own eternity.
Our simple life wants little, and true taste
Hires not the pale drudge Luxury to waste
The scene it would adorn, and therefore still,
Nature, with all her children, haunts the hill.
The ring-dove, in the embowering ivy, yet
Keeps up her love-lament, and the owls flit
Round the evening tower, and the young stars glance
Between the quick bats in their twilight dance;
The spotted deer bask in the fresh moon-light
Before our gate, and the slow silent night
Is measured by the pants of their calm sleep.
Be this our home in life, and when years heap
Their withered hours, like leaves, on our decay,
Let us become the over-hanging day,
The living soul of this Elysian isle,
Conscious, inseparable, one. Meanwhile
We two will rise, and sit, and walk together,
Under the roof of blue Ionian weather,
And wander in the meadows, or ascend
The mossy mountains, where the blue heavens bend
With lightest winds, to touch their paramour;
Or linger, where the pebble-paven shore,

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Under the quick faint kisses of the sea
Trembles and sparkles as with ecstacy,—
Possessing and possest by all that is
Within that calm circumference of bliss,
And by each other, till to love and live
Be one:—or, at the noontide hour, arrive
Where some old cavern hoar seems yet to keep
The moonlight of the expired night asleep,
Through which the awakened day can never peep;
A veil for our seclusion, close as Night's,
Where secure sleep may kill thine innocent lights;
Sleep, the fresh dew of languid love, the rain
Whose drops quench kisses till they burn again.
And we will talk, until thought's melody
Become too sweeet for utterance, and it die
In words, to live again in looks, which dart
With thrilling tone into the voiceless heart,
Harmonizing silence without a sound.
Our breath shall intermix, our bosoms bound,
And our veins beat together; and our lips,
With other eloquence than words, eclipse
The soul that burns between them, and the wells
Which boil under our being's inmost cells,
The fountains of our deepest life, shall be
Confused in passion's golden purity,
As mountain-springs under the morning Sun.
We shall become the same, we shall be one
Spirit within two frames, oh! wherefore two?
One passion in twin-hearts, which grows and grew,
'Till, like two meteors of expanding flame,
Those spheres instinct with it become the same,
Touch, mingle, are transfigured; ever still
Burning, yet ever inconsumable:

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In one another's substance finding food,
Like flames too pure and light and unimbued
To nourish their bright lives with baser prey,
Which point to Heaven and cannot pass away:
One hope within two wills, one will beneath
Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,
One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,
And one annihilation. Woe is me!
The winged words on which my soul would pierce
Into the height of love's rare Universe,
Are chains of lead around its flight of fire.—
I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!

Weak Verses, go, kneel at your Sovereign's feet,
And say:—"We are the masters of thy slave;
"What wouldest thou with us and ours and thine?"
Then call your sisters from Oblivion's cave,
All singing loud: "Love's very pain is sweet,
"But its reward is in the world divine,
"Which, if not here, it builds beyond the grave."
So shall ye live when I am there. Then haste
Over the hearts of men, until ye meet
Marina, Vanna, Primus, and the rest,
And bid them love each other and be blest:
And leave the troop which errs, and which reproves,
And come and be my guest,—for I am Love's.

END OF EPIPSYCHIDION.

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JULIAN AND MADDALO.

The meadows with fresh streams, the bees with thyme,
The goats with the green leaves of budding spring,
Are saturated not—nor Love with tears. *Virgil's Gallus.*

Count Maddalo is a Venetian nobleman of ancient family and of great fortune, who, without mixing much in the society of his countrymen, resides chiefly at his magnificent palace in that city. He is a person of the most consummate genius; and capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness to be proud: he derives, from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life. His passions and his powers are incomparably greater than those of other men, and, instead of the latter having been employed in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength. His ambition preys upon itself, for want of objects which it can consider worthy of exertion. I say that Maddalo is proud, because I can find no other word to express the concentered and impatient feelings which consume him; but it is on his own hopes and affections only that he seems to trample, for in social life no human being can be more gentle, patient, and unassuming than Maddalo. He is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation is a sort of intoxication; men are held by it as by a spell. He has travelled much; and there is an inexpressible charm in his relation of his adventures in different countries.

Julian is an Englishman of good family, passionately attached to those philosophical notions which assert the power of man over his own mind, and the immense improvements of

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which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may yet be susceptible. Without concealing the evil in the world, he is for ever speculating how good may be made superior. He is a complete infidel, and a scoffer at all things reputed holy; and Maddalo takes a wicked pleasure in drawing out his taunts against religion. What Maddalo thinks on these matters is not exactly known. Julian, in spite of his heterodox opinions, is conjectured by his friends to possess some good qualities. How far this is possible, the pious reader will determine. Julian is rather serious.

Of the Maniac I can give no information. He seems by his own account to have been disappointed in love. He was evidently a very cultivated and amiable person when in his right senses. His story, told at length, might be like many other stories of the same kind: the unconnected exclamations of his agony will perhaps be found a sufficient comment for the text of every heart.

JULIAN AND MADDALO:

A CONVERSATION.

I RODE one evening with Count Maddalo
Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow
Of Adria towards Venice: a bare strand
Of hillocks, heaped from ever-shifting sand,
Matted with thistles and amphibious weeds,
Such as from earth's embrace the salt ooze breeds,
Is this; an uninhabited sea-side,
Which the lone fisher, when his nets are dried,
Abandons; and no other object breaks
The waste, but one dwarf tree and some few stakes
Broken and unrepaired, and the tide makes

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A narrow space of level sand thereon,
Where 'twas our wont to ride while day went down.
This ride was my delight. I love all waste
And solitary places; where we taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be:
And such was this wide ocean, and this shore
More barren than its billows; and yet more
Than all, with a remembered friend I love
To ride as then I rode;—for the winds drove
The living spray along the sunny air
Into our faces; the blue heavens were bare,
Stripped to their depths by the awakening north;
And, from the waves, sound like delight broke forth
Harmonizing with solitude, and sent
Into our hearts aërial merriment.
So, as we rode, we talked; and the swift thought,
Winging itself with laughter, lingered not,
But flew from brain to brain,—such glee was ours,
Charged with light memories of remembered hours,
None slow enough for sadness: till we came
Homeward, which always makes the spirit tame.
This day had been cheerful but cold, and now
The sun was sinking, and the wind also.
Our talk grew somewhat serious, as may be
Talk interrupted with such raillery
As mocks itself, because it cannot scorn
The thoughts it would extinguish:—'twas forlorn,
Yet pleasing; such as once, so poets tell,
The devils held within the dales of hell,
Concerning God, freewill, and destiny.
Of all that Earth has been, or yet may be;
All that vain men imagine or believe,
Or hope can paint, or suffering can achieve,

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We descanted; and I (for ever still
Is it not wise to make the best of ill?)
Argued against despondency; but pride
Made my companion take the darker side.
The sense that he was greater than his kind
Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind
By gazing on its own exceeding light.
Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight
Over the horizon of the mountains—Oh!
How beautiful is sunset, when the glow
Of heaven descends upon a land like thee,
Thou paradise of exiles, Italy!
Thy mountains, seas, and vineyards, and the towers
Of cities they encircle!—It was ours
To stand on thee, beholding it: and then,
Just where we had dismounted, the Count's men
Were waiting for us with the gondola.
As those who pause on some delightful way,
Tho' bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood,
Looking upon the evening and the flood,
Which lay between the city and the shore,
Paved with the image of the sky: the hoar
And aery Alps, towards the north, appeared,
Thro' mist, a heaven-sustaining bulwark, reared
Between the east and west; and half the sky
Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry,
Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew
Down the steep west into a wondrous hue
Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent
Where the swift sun yet paused in his descent
Among the many-folded hills—they were
Those famous Euganean hills, which bear,
As seen from Lido thro' the harbour piles,
The likeness of a clump of peaked isles—

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And then, as if the earth and sea had been
Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen
Those mountains towering, as from waves of flame,
Around the vaporous sun, from which there came
The inmost purple spirit of light, and made
Their very peaks transparent. "Ere it fade,"
Said my companion, "I will show you soon
A better station." So, o'er the lagune
We glided; and from that funereal bark
I leaned, and saw the city, and could mark
How from their many isles, in evening's gleam,
Its temples and its palaces did seem
Like fabrics of enchantment piled to heav'n.
I was about to speak, when—"We are even
Now at the point I meant," said Maddalo,
And bade the gondolieri cease to row.
"Look, Julian, on the west, and listen well
If you hear not a deep and heavy bell."
I looked, and saw between us and the sun
A building on an island, such a one
As age to age might add, for uses vile,—
A windowless, deformed, and dreary pile;
And on the top an open tower, where hung
A bell, which in the radiance swayed and swung,
We could just hear its coarse and iron tongue:
The broad sun sank behind it, and it tolled
In strong and black relief.—"What we behold
Shall be the madhouse and its belfry tower,"—
Said Maddalo; "and even at this hour,
Those who may cross the water hear that bell,
Which calls the maniacs, each one from his cell,
To vespers."—"As much skill as need to pray,
In thanks or hope for their dark lot have they,
To their stern maker," I replied.—"O, ho!
You talk as in years past," said Maddalo.

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"'Tis strange men change not. You were ever still
Among Christ's flock a perilous infidel,
A wolf for the meek lambs: if you can't swim,
Beware of providence." I looked on him,
But the gay smile had faded from his eye.
"And such," he cried, "is our mortality;
And this must be the emblem and the sign
Of what should be eternal and divine;
And like that black and dreary bell the soul,
Hung in a heav'n-illumined tower, must toll
Our thoughts and our desires to meet below
Round the rent heart, and pray—as madmen do;
For what? they know not, till the night of death,
As sunset that strange vision, severeth
Our memory from itself, and us from all
We sought, and yet were baffled." I recall
The sense of what he said, although I mar
The force of his expressions. The broad star
Of day meanwhile had sunk behind the hill;
And the black bell became invisible;
And the red tower looked grey; and all between,
The churches, ships, and palaces, were seen
Huddled in gloom; into the purple sea
The orange hues of heaven sunk silently.
We hardly spoke, and soon the gondola
Conveyed me to my lodging by the way.

The following morn was rainy, cold, and dim:
Ere Maddalo arose I called on him,
And whilst I waited with his child I played;
A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made;
A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being;
Graceful without design, and unforeseeing;
With eyes—Oh! speak not of her eyes! which seem
Twin Mirrors of Italian Heaven, yet gleam

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With such deep meaning as we never see
But in the human countenance. With me
She was a special favourite: I had nursed
Her fine and feeble limbs, when she came first
To this bleak world; and yet she seemed to know
On second sight her ancient playfellow,
Less changed than she was by six months or so.
For, after her first shyness was worn out,
We sate there, rolling billiard balls about,
When the Count entered. Salutations pass'd:
"The words you spoke last night might well have cast
A darkness on my spirit:—if man be
The passive thing you say, I should not see
Much harm in the religions and old saws,
(Tho' *I* may never own such leaden laws)
Which break a teachless nature to the yoke:
Mine is another faith."—Thus much I spoke,
And, noting he replied not, added—"See
This lovely child; blithe, innocent, and free;
She spends a happy time, with little care;
While we to such sick thoughts subjected are,
As came on you last night. It is our will
Which thus enchains us to permitted ill.
We might be otherwise; we might be all
We dream of, happy, high, majestical.
Where is the beauty, love, and truth, we seek,
But in our minds? And, if we were not weak,
Should we be less in deed than in desire?"—
—"Aye, if we were not weak,—and we aspire,
How vainly! to be strong," said Maddalo:
"You talk Utopian"—

"It remains to know,"
I then rejoined, "and those who try, may find
How strong the chains are which our spirit bind:

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Brittle perchance as straw. We are assured
Much may be conquered, much may be endured,
Of what degrades and crushes us. We know
That we have power over ourselves to do
And suffer—*what*, we know not till we try;
But something nobler than to live and die:
So taught the kings of old philosophy,
Who reigned before religion made men blind;
And those who suffer with their suffering kind,
Yet feel this faith, religion."

"My dear friend,"
Said Maddalo, "my judgment will not bend
To your opinion, though I think you might
Make such a system refutation-tight,
As far as words go. I knew one like you,
Who to this city came some months ago,
With whom I argued in this sort,—and he
Is now gone mad—and so he answered me,
Poor fellow!—But if you would like to go,
We'll visit him, and his wild talk will shew
How vain are such aspiring theories."—

"I hope to prove the induction otherwise,
And that a want of that true theory still,
Which seeks a soul of goodness in things ill,
Or in himself or others, has thus bow'd
His being:—there are some by nature proud,
Who, patient in all else, demand but this—
To love and be beloved with gentleness:—
And being scorned, what wonder if they die
Some living death? This is not destiny,
But man's own wilful ill."

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As thus I spoke,
Servants announced the gondola, and we
Through the fast-falling rain and high-wrought sea
Sailed to the island where the madhouse stands.
We disembarked. The clap of tortured hands,
Fierce yells and howlings, and lamentings keen,
And laughter where complaint had merrier been,
Accosted us. We climbed the oozy stairs
Into an old court-yard. I heard on high,
Then, fragments of most touching melody,
But looking up saw not the singer there.—
Thro' the black bars in the tempestuous air
I saw, like weeds on a wreck'd palace growing,
Long tangled locks flung wildly forth and flowing,
Of those on a sudden who were beguiled
Into strange silence, and looked forth and smiled,
Hearing sweet sounds. Then I:—

"Methinks there were
A cure of these with patience and kind care,
If music can thus move. But what is he,
Whom we seek here?"

"Of his sad history
I know but this," said Maddalo: "he came
To Venice a dejected man, and fame
Said he was wealthy, or he had been so.
Some thought the loss of fortune wrought him woe;
But he was ever talking in such sort
As you do,—but more sadly;—he seem'd hurt,
Even as a man with his peculiar wrong,
To hear but of the oppression of the strong,
Or those absurd deceits (I think with you
In some respects, you know) which carry thro'

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The excellent impostors of this earth
When they outface detection. He had worth,
Poor fellow! but a humourist in his way."—

—"Alas, what drove him mad?"

"I cannot say:
A lady came with him from France, and when
She left him and returned, he wander'd then
About yon lonely isles of desert sand,
Till he grew wild. He had no cash nor land
Remaining:—the police had brought him here—
Some fancy took him, and he would not bear
Removal, so I fitted up for him
Those rooms beside the sea, to please his whim;
And sent him busts, and books, and urns for flowers,
Which had adorned his life in happier hours,
And instruments of music. You may guess
A stranger could do little more or less
For one so gentle and unfortunate—
And those are his sweet strains which charm the weight
From madmen's chains, and make this hell appear
A heaven of sacred silence, hushed to hear."

"Nay, this was kind of you,—he had no claim,
As the world says."

"None but the very same
Which I on all mankind, were I, as he,
Fall'n to such deep reverse. His melody
Is interrupted now: we hear the din
Of madmen, shriek on shriek, again begin:
Let us now visit him: after this strain,

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"He ever communes with himself again,
And sees and hears not any."

Having said
These words, we called the keeper, and he led
To an apartment opening on the sea—
There the poor wretch was sitting mournfully
Near a piano, his pale fingers twined
One with the other; and the ooze and wind
Rushed thro' an open casement, and did sway
His hair, and started it with the brackish spray:
His head was leaning on a music book,
And he was muttering; and his lean limbs shook;
His lips were pressed against a folded leaf,
In hue too beautiful for health, and grief
Smiled in their motions as they lay apart,
As one who wrought from his own fervid heart
The eloquence of passion: soon he raised
His sad meek face, and eyes lustrous and glazed,
And spoke,—sometimes as one who wrote, and thought
His words might move some heart that heeded not,
If sent to distant lands;—and then as one
Reproaching deeds never to be undone,
With wondering self-compassion;—then his speech
Was lost in grief, and then his words came each
Unmodulated and expressionless,—
But that from one jarred accent you might guess
It was despair made them so uniform:
And all the while the loud and gusty storm
Hissed thro' the window, and we stood behind,
Stealing his accents from the envious wind,
Unseen. I yet remember what he said
Distinctly, such impression his words made.

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"Month after month," he cried, "to bear this load,
And, as a jade urged by the whip and goad,
To drag life on—which like a heavy chain
Lengthens behind with many a link of pain,
And not to speak my grief—O, not to dare
To give a human voice to my despair;
But live, and move, and, wretched thing! smile on,
As if I never went aside to groan,
And wear this mask of falsehood even to those
Who are most dear—not for my own repose—
Alas! no scorn, nor pain, nor hate, could be
So heavy as that falsehood is to me—
But that I cannot bear more altered faces
Than needs must be, more changed and cold embraces,
More misery, disappointment, and mistrust,
To own me for their father. Would the dust
Were covered in upon my body now!
That the life ceased to toil within my brow!
And then these thoughts would at the last be fled:
Let us not fear such pain can vex the dead.

"What Power delights to torture us? I know
That to myself I do not wholly owe
What now I suffer, though in part I may.
Alas! none strewed fresh flowers upon the way
Where, wandering heedlessly, I met pale Pain,
My shadow, which will leave me not again.
If I have erred, there was no joy in error,
But pain, and insult, and unrest, and terror;
I have not, as some do, bought penitence
With pleasure, and a dark yet sweet offence;
For then if love, and tenderness, and truth,
Had overlived Hope's momentary youth

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My creed should have redeemed me from repenting;
But loathed scorn and outrage unrelenting
Met love excited by far other seeming
Until the end was gained:—as one from dreaming
Of sweetest peace, I woke, and found my state
Such as it is.—

"O thou, my spirit's mate!
Who, for thou art compassionate and wise,
Wouldst pity me from thy most gentle eyes
If this sad writing thou shouldst ever see,
My secret groans must be unheard by thee;
Thou wouldst weep tears, bitter as blood, to know
Thy lost friend's incommunicable woe.
Ye few by whom my nature has been weighed
In friendship, let me not that name degrade,
By placing on your hearts the secret load
Which crushes mine to dust. There is one road
To peace, and that is truth, which follow ye!
Love sometimes leads astray to misery.
Yet think not, tho' subdued (and I may well
Say that I am subdued)—that the full hell
Within me would infect the untainted breast
Of sacred nature with its own unrest;
As some perverted beings think to find
In scorn or hate a medicine for the mind
Which scorn or hate hath wounded.—O, how vain!
The dagger heals not, but may rend again.
Believe that I am ever still the same
In creed as in resolve; and what may tame
My heart, must leave the understanding free,
Or all would sink under this agony.—
Nor dream that I will join the vulgar eye,
Or with my silence sanction tyranny,

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Or seek a moment's shelter from my pain
In any madness which the world calls gain;
Ambition, or revenge, or thoughts as stern
As those which make me what I am, or turn
To avarice or misanthrophy or lust.
Heap on me soon, O grave, thy welcome dust!
'Till then the dungeon may demand its prey;
And Poverty and Shame may meet and say,
Halting beside me in the public way,—
'That love-devoted youth is ours: let's sit
Beside him: he may live some six months yet.'—
Or the red scaffold, as our country bends,
May ask some willing victim; or ye, friends,
May fall under some sorrow, which this heart
Or hand may share, or vanquish, or avert;
I am prepared, in truth, with no proud joy,
To do or suffer aught, as when a boy
I did devote to justice, and to love,
My nature, worthless now.

"I must remove
A veil from my pent mind. 'Tis torn aside!
O! palid as Death's dedicated bride,
Thou mockery which art sitting by my side,
Am I not wan like thee? At the grave's call
I haste, invited to thy wedding-ball,
To meet the ghastly paramour, for whom
Thou hast deserted me,—and made the tomb
Thy bridal bed. But I beside thy feet
Will lie, and watch ye from my winding-sheet
Thus—wide awake tho' dead——Yet stay, O, stay!
Go not so soon—I know not what I say—
Hear but my reasons—I am mad, I fear,
My fancy is o'erwrought—thou art not here.

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Pale art thou, 'tis most true——but thou art gone—
Thy work is finished; I am left alone.

* * * * * *

"Nay, was it I who wooed thee to this breast,
Which like a serpent thou envenomest
As in repayment of the warmth it lent?
Didst thou not seek me for thine own content?
Did not thy love awaken mine? I thought
That thou wert she who said 'You kiss me not
Ever; I fear you do not love me now.'
In truth I loved even to my overthrow
Her, who would fain forget these words, but they
Cling to her mind, and cannot pass away.

* * * * * *

"You say that I am proud; that when I speak,
My lip is tortured with the wrongs, which break
The spirit it expresses.—Never one
Humbled himself before, as I have done!
Even the instinctive worm on which we tread
Turns, tho' it wound not—then, with prostrate head,
Sinks in the dust, and writhes like me—and dies:
——No:—wears a living death of agonies!
As the slow shadows of the pointed grass
Mark the eternal periods, its pangs pass,
Slow, ever-moving, making moments be
As mine seem,—each an immortality!

* * * * * *

"That you had never seen me! never heard
My voice! and, more than all, had ne'er endured
The deep pollution of my loathed embrace!
That your eyes ne'er had lied love in my face!
That, like some maniac monk, I had torn out
The nerves of manhood by their bleeding root

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With mine own quivering fingers! so that ne'er
Our hearts had for a moment mingled there,
To disunite in horror! These were not
With thee like some suppressed and hideous thought,
Which flits athwart our musings, but can find
No rest within a pure and gentle mind—
Thou sealed'st them with many a bare broad word,
And seard'st my memory o'er them,—for I heard
And can forget not—they were ministered,
One after one, those curses. Mix them up
Like self-destroying poisons in one cup;
And they will make one blessing, which thou ne'er
Didst imprecate for on me——death!

"It were
A cruel punishment for one most cruel,
If such can love, to make that love the fuel
Of the mind's hell—hate, scorn, remorse, despair:
But *me*, whose heart a stranger's tear might wear,
As water-drops the sandy fountain stone;
Who loved and pitied all things, and could moan
For woes which others hear not, and could see
The absent with the glass of phantasy,
And near the poor and trampled sit and weep,
Following the captive to his dungeon deep;
Me, who am as a nerve o'er which do creep
The else-unfelt oppressions of this earth,
And was to thee the flame upon thy hearth,
When all beside was cold:—that thou on me
Shouldst rain these plagues of blistering agony—
Such curses are from lips once eloquent
With love's too partial praise! Let none relent
Who intend deeds too dreadful for a name
Henceforth, if an example for the same

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They seek:—for thou on me lookedst so and so,
And didst speak thus and thus. I live to shew
How much men bear, and die not.
* * * * * *

" Thou wilt tell,
With the grimace of hate, how horrible
It was to meet my love when thine grew less;
Thou wilt admire how I could e'er address
Such features to love's work....This taunt, tho' true,
(For indeed nature nor in form nor hue
Bestowed on me her choicest workmanship)
Shall not be thy defence: for since thy life
Met mine first, years long past,—since thine eye kindled
With soft fire under mine,—I have not dwindled,
Nor changed in mind, or body, or in aught
But as love changes what it loveth not
After long years and many trials.
* * * * * *

" How vain
Are words! I thought never to speak again,
Not even in secret, not to my own heart—
But from my lips the unwilling accents start,,
And from my pen the words flow as I write,
Dazzling my eyes with scalding tears—my sight
Is dim to see that charactered in vain,
On this unfeeling leaf, which burns the brain
And eats into it, blotting all things fair,
And wise and good, which time had written there.
Those who inflict must suffer, for they see
The work of their own hearts, and that must be
Our chastisement or recompense.—O child!
I would that thine were like to be more mild
For both our wretched sakes,—for thine the most,
Who feel'st already all that thou hast lost,

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Without the power to wish it thine again.
And, as slow years pass, a funereal train,
Each with the ghost of some lost hope or friend
Following it like its shadow, wilt thou bend
No thought on my dead memory?
* * * * *

"Alas, love!
Fear me not: against thee I'd not move
A finger in despite. Do I not live
That thou mayst have less bitter cause to grieve?
I give thee tears for scorn, and love for hate;
And, that thy lot may be less desolate
Than his on whom thou tramplest, I refrain
From that sweet sleep which medicines all pain.
Then—when thou speakest of me—never say,
'He could forgive not.'—Here I cast away
All human passions, all revenge, all pride;
I think, speak, acts no ill; I do but hide
Under these words, like embers, every spark
Of that which has consumed me. Quick and dark
The grave is yawning:—as its roof shall cover
My limbs with dust and worms, under and over,
So let oblivion hide this grief—The air
Closes upon my accents, as despair
Upon my heart—let death upon my care!"

He ceased, and overcome, leant back awhile;
Then rising, with a melancholy smile,
Went to a sofa, and lay down, and slept
A heavy sleep, and in his dreams he wept,
And muttered some familiar name, and we
Wept without shame in his society.
I think I never was impress'd so much;
The man, who was not, must have lack'd a touch
Of human nature.—Then we linger'd not,

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Although our argument was quite forgot;
But, calling the attendants, went to dine
At Maddalo's:—yet neither cheer nor wine
Could give us spirits, for we talked of him,
And nothing else, till day light made stars dim.
And we agreed it was some dreadful ill
Wrought on him boldly, yet unspeakable,
By a dear friend; some deadly change in love
Of one vow'd deeply which he dreamed not of;
For whose sake, he it seemed, had fixed a blot
Of falsehood in his mind, which flourish'd not
But in the light of all-beholding truth;
And having stamped this canker on his youth,
She had abandoned him:—and how much more
Might be his woe, we guessed not:—he had store
Of friends and fortune once, as we could guess
From his nice habits and his gentleness:
These now were lost—it were a grief indeed
If he had changed one unsustaining reed
For all that such a man might else adorn.
The colours of his mind seemed yet unworn;
For the wild language of his grief was high—
Such as in measure were called poetry.
And I remember one remark, which then
Maddalo made: he said—"Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong:
They learn in suffering what they teach in song."

If I had been an unconnected man,
I, from this moment, should have form'd some plan
Never to leave sweet Venice: for to me
It was delight to ride by the lone sea:
And then the town is silent—one may write
Or read in gondolas, by day or night,
Having the little brazen lamp alight,

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Unseen, uninterrupted:—books are there,
Pictures, and casts from all those statues fair
Which were twin-born with poetry;—and all
We seek in towns, with little to recal
Regret for the green country:—I might sit
In Maddalo's great palace, and his wit
And subtle talk would cheer the winter night,
And make me know myself:—and the fire light
Would flash upon our faces, till the day
Might dawn, and make me wonder at my stay.
But I had friends in London too. The chief
Attraction here was that I sought relief
From the deep tenderness that maniac wrought
Within me—'twas perhaps an idle thought,
But I imagined that if, day by day,
I watched him, and seldom went away,
And studied all the beatings of his heart
With zeal, as men study some stubborn art
For their own good, and could by patience find
An entrance to the caverns of his mind,
I might reclaim him from his dark estate.
In friendships I had been most fortunate,
Yet never saw I one whom I would call
More willingly my friend:—and this was all
Accomplish'd not;—such dreams of baseless good
Oft come and go, in crowds or solitude,
And leave no trace!—but what I now design'd,
Made, for long years, impression on my mind.
—The following morning, urged by my affairs,
I left bright Venice.—

After many years,
And many changes, I returned; the name
Of Venice, and its aspect, was the same

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But Maddalo was travelling, far away,
Among the mountains of Armenia.
His dog was dead: his child had now become
A woman, such as it has been my doom
To meet with few; a wonder of this earth,
Where there is little of transcendent worth,—
Like one of Shakspeare's women. Kindly she,
And with a manner beyond courtesy,
Receiv'd her father's friend; and, when I ask'd
Of the lorn maniac, she her memory task'd,
And told, as she had heard, the mournful tale:
"That the poor sufferer's health began to fail
Two years from my departure; but that then
The lady, who had left him, came again.
Her mien had been imperious, but she now
Look'd meek; perhaps remorse had brought her low.
Her coming made him better; and they stayed
Together at my father's,—for I played,
As I remember, with the lady's shawl;
I might be six years old:—But, after all,
She left him."—

"Why, her heart must have been tough;
How did it end?"

"And was not this enough?
They met, they parted."

"Child, is there no more?"

"Something within that interval, which bore
The stamp of *why* they parted, *how* they met;—
Yet, if thine aged eyes disdain to wet
Those wrinkled cheeks with youth's remember'd tears,
Ask me no more; but let the silent years

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Be clos'd and cer'd over their memory,
As yon mute marble where their corpses lie."
I urged and questioned still: she told me how
All happen'd—but the cold world shall not know.

Rome, May, 1819.

THE WITCH OF ATLAS.

Before those cruel Twins, whom at one birth
Incestuous Change bore to her father Time,
Error and Truth, had hunted from the earth
All those bright natures which adorned its prime,
And left us nothing to believe in, worth
The pains of putting into learned rhyme,
A lady-witch there lived on Atlas' mountain
Within a cavern by a secret fountain.

Her mother was one of the Atlantides:
The all-beholding Sun had ne'er beholden
In his wide voyage o'er continents and seas
So fair a creature, as she lay enfolden
In the warm shadow of her loveliness;—
He kissed her with his beams, and made all golden
The chamber of grey rock in which she lay—
She, in that dream of joy, dissolved away.

'Tis said, she was first changed into a vapour,
And then into a cloud, such clouds as flit,
Like splendour-winged moths about a taper,
Round the red west when the sun dies in it:
And then into a meteor, such as caper
On hill-tops when the moon is in a fit;

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Then, into one of those mysterious stars
Which hide themselves between the Earth and Mars.

Ten times the Mother of the Months had bent
Her bow beside the folding-star, and bidden
With that bright sign the billows to indent
The sea-deserted sand: like children chidden,
At her command they ever came and went:—
Since in that cave a dewy splendour hidden,
Took shape and motion: with the living form
Of this embodied Power, the cave grew warm.

A lovely lady garmented in light
From her own beauty—deep her eyes, as are
Two openings of unfathomable night
Seen through a tempest's cloven roof—her hair
Dark—the dim brain whirls dizzy with delight,
Picturing her form; her soft smiles shone afar,
And her low voice was heard like love, and drew
All living things towards this wonder new.

And first the spotted cameleopard came,
And then the wise and fearless elephant;
Then the sly serpent, in the golden flame
Of his own volumes intervolved;—all gaunt
And sanguine beasts her gentle looks made tame.
They drank before her at her sacred fount;
And every beast of beating heart grew bold,
Such gentleness and power even to behold.

The brindled lioness led forth her young,
That she might teach them how they should forego
Their inborn thirst of death; the pard unstrung
His sinews at her feet, and sought to know

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With looks whose motions spoke without a tongue
How he might be as gentle as the doe.
The magic circle of her voice and eyes
All savage natures did imparadise.

And old Silenus, shaking a green stick
Of lilies, and the wood-gods in a crew
Came, blithe, as in the olive copses thick
Cicadæ are, drunk with the noonday dew:
And Driope and Faunus followed quick,
Teazing the God to sing them something new,
Till in this cave they found the lady lone,
Sitting upon a seat of emerald stone.

And universal Pan, 'tis said, was there,
And though none saw him,—through the adamant
Of the deep mountains, through the trackless air,
And through those living spirits, like a want
He pass'd out of his everlasting lair
Where the quick heart of the great world doth pant,
And felt that wondrous lady all alone,—
And she felt him upon her emerald throne.

And every nymph of stream and spreading tree,
And every shepherdess of Ocean's flocks,
Who drives her white waves over the green sea;
And Ocean, with the brine on his grey locks,
And quaint Priapus with his company
All came, much wondering how the enwombed rocks
Could have brought forth so beautiful a birth;—
Her love subdued their wonder and their mirth.

The herdsmen and the mountain maidens came,
And the rude kings of pastoral Garamant—

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These spirits shook within them, as a flame
Stirred by the air under a cavern gaunt:
Pigmies, and Polyphemes, by many a name,
Centaurs and Satyrs, and such shapes as haunt
Wet clefts,—and lumps neither alive nor dead,
Dog-headed, bosom-eyed, and bird-footed.

For she was beautiful: her beauty made
The bright world dim, and every thing beside
Seemed like the fleeting image of a shade:
No thought of living spirit could abide,
Which to her looks had ever been betrayed,
On any object in the world so wide,
On any hope within the circling skies,
But on her form, and in her inmost eyes.

Which when the lady knew, she took her spindle
And twined three threads of fleecy mist, and three
Long lines of light, such as the dawn may kindle
The clouds and waves and mountains with, and she
As many star-beams, ere their lamps could dwindle
In the belated moon, wound skilfully;
And with these threads a subtle veil she wove—
A shadow for the splendour of her love.

The deep recesses of her odorous dwelling
Were stored with magic treasures—sounds of air,
Which had the power all spirits of compelling,
Folded in cells of chrystal silence there;
Such as we hear in youth, and think the feeling
Will never die—yet ere we are aware,
The feeling and the sound are fled and gone,
And the regret they leave remains alone.

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And there lay visions swift, and sweet, and quaint,
Each in its thin sheath like a chrysalis;
Some eager to burst forth, some weak and faint
With the soft burthen of intensest bliss:
It is its work to bear to many a saint
Whose heart adores the shrine which holiest is,
Even Love's—and others white, green, grey, and black.
And of all shapes—and each was at her beck.

And odours in a kind of aviary
Of ever-blooming Eden-trees she kept,
Clipt in a floating net, a love-sick Fairy
Had woven from dew-beams while the moon yet slept;
As bats at the wired window of a dairy,
They beat their vans; and each was an adept,
When loosed and missioned, making wings of winds,
To stir sweet thoughts or sad in destined minds.

And liquors clear and sweet, whose healthful might
Could medicine the sick soul to happy sleep,
And change eternal death into a night
Of glorious dreams—or if eyes needs must weep,
Could make their tears all wonder and delight,
She in her chrystal vials did closely keep:
If men could drink of those clear vials, 'tis said
The living were not envied of the dead.

Her cave was stor'd with scrolls of strange device,
The works of some Saturnian Archimage,
Which taught the expiations at whose price
Men from the Gods might win that happy age
Too lightly lost, redeeming native vice;
And which might quench the earth-consuming rage

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Of gold and blood—till men should live and move
Harmonious as the sacred stars above.

And how all things that seem untameable,
Not to be checked and not to be confined,
Obey the spells of wisdom's wizard skill;
Time, Earth, and Fire—the Ocean and the Wind,
And all their shapes—and man's imperial will;
And other scrolls whose writings did unbind
The inmost lore of Love—let the prophane
Tremble to ask what secrets they contain.

And wondrous works of substances unknown,
To which the enchantment of her father's power
Had changed those ragged blocks of savage stone,
Were heaped in the recesses of her bower;
Carved lamps and chalices, and phials which shone
In their own golden beams—each like a flower,
Out of whose depth a fire-fly shakes his light
Under a cypress in a starless night.

At first she lived alone in this wild home,
And her thoughts were each a minister,
Clothing themselves or with the ocean-foam,
Or with the wind, or with the speed of fire,
To work whatever purposes might come
Into her mind; such power her mighty Sire
Had girt them with, whether to fly or run,
Through all the regions which he shines upon.

The Ocean-nymphs and Hamadryades,
Oreads and Naiads with long weedy locks,
Offered to do her bidding through the seas,
Under the earth, and in the hollow rocks,

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And far beneath the matted roots of trees,
And in the gnarled heart of stubborn oaks,
So they might live for ever in the light
Of her sweet presence—each a satellite.

"This may not be," the wizard maid replied;
"The fountains where the Naiades bedew
Their shining hair, at length are drained and dried;
The solid oaks forget their strength, and strew
Their latest leaf upon the mountains wide;
The boundless ocean, like a drop of dew
Will be consumed—the stubborn centre must
Be scattered, like a cloud of summer dust.

"And ye with them will perish one by one:
If I must sigh to think that this shall be,
If I must weep when the surviving Sun
Shall smile on your decay—Oh, ask not me
To love you till your little race is run;
I cannot die as ye must—over me
Your leaves shall glance—the streams in which ye dwell
Shall be my paths henceforth, and so farewell!"

She spoke and wept: the dark and azure well
Sparkled beneath the shower of her bright tears,
And every little circlet where they fell,
Flung to the cavern-roof inconstant spheres
And intertangled lines of light:—a knell
Of sobbing voices came upon her ears
From those departing Forms, o'er the serene
Of the white streams and of the forest green.

All day the wizard lady sat aloof,
Spelling out scrolls of dread antiquity

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Under the cavern's fountain-lighted roof;
Or brodering the pictured poesy
Of some high tale upon her growing woof,
Which the sweet splendour of her smiles could dye
In hues outshining heaven—and ever she
Added some grace to the wrought poesy

While on her hearth lay blazing many a piece
Of sandal wood, rare gums, and cinnamon;
Men scarcely know how beautiful fire is,
Each flame of it is as a precious stone
Dissolved in ever-moving light, and this
Belongs to each and all who gaze upon.
The Witch beheld it not, for in her hand
She held a woof that dimmed the burning brand.

This lady never slept, but lay in trance
All night within the fountain—as in sleep.
Its emerald crags glowed in her beauty's glance:
Through the green splendour of the water deep
She saw the constellations reel and dance
Like fire-flies—and withal did ever keep
The tenour of her contemplations calm,
With open eyes, closed feet, and folded palm.

And when the whirlwinds and the clouds descended
From the white pinnacles of that cold hill,
She pass'd at dewfall to a space extended,
Where in a lawn of flowering asphodel
Amid a wood of pines and cedars blended,
There yawned an inextinguishable well
Of crimson fire, full even to the brim,
And overflowing all the margin trim.

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Within the which she lay when the fierce war
Of wintry winds shook that innocuous liquor
In many a mimic moon and bearded star,
O'er woods and lawns—the serpent heard it flick
In sleep, and dreaming still, he crept afar—
And when the windless snow descended thicker
Than autumn leaves, she watched it as it came
Melt on the surface of the level flame.

She had a Boat which some say Vulcan wrought
For Venus, as the chariot of her star;
But it was found too feeble to be fraught
With all the ardours in that sphere which are,
And so she sold it, and Apollo bought
And gave it to this daughter: from a car
Changed to the fairest and the lightest boat
Which ever upon mortal stream did float.

And others say, that, when but three hours old,
The first-born Love out of his cradle leapt,
And clove dun Chaos with his wings of gold,
And like an horticultural adept,
Stole a strange seed, and wrapt it up in mould,
And sowed it in his mother's star, and kept
Watering it all the summer with sweet dew,
And with his wings fanning it as it grew.

The plant grew strong and green—the snowy flower
Fell, and the long and gourd-like fruit began
To turn the light and dew by inward power
To its own substance: woven tracery ran
Of light firm texture, ribbed and branching, o'er
The solid rind, like a leaf's veined fan,

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Of which Love scooped this boat, and with soft motion
Piloted it round the circumfluous ocean.

This boat she moored upon her fount, and lit
A living spirit within all its frame,
Breathing the soul of swiftness into it.
Couched on the fountain like a panther tame,
One of the twain at Evan's feet that sit;
Or as on Vesta's sceptre a swift flame,
Or on blind Homer's heart a winged thought,—
In joyous expectation lay the boat.

Then by strange art she kneaded fire and snow
Together, tempering the repugnant mass
With liquid love—all things together grow
Through which the harmony of love can pass;
And a fair Shape out of her hands did flow
A living Image, which did far surpass
In beauty that bright shape of vital stone
Which drew the heart out of Pygmalion.

A sexless thing it was, and in its growth
It seemed to have developed no defect
Of either sex, yet all the grace of both,—
In gentleness and strength its limbs were decked;
The bosom swelled lightly with its full youth,
The countenance was such as might select
Some artist that his skill should never die,
Imaging forth such perfect purity.

From its smooth shoulders hung two rapid wings,
Fit to have borne it to the seventh sphere,
Tipt with the speed of liquid lightnings,
Dyed in the ardours of the atmosphere:

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She led her creature to the boiling springs
Where the light boat was moored,—and said—"Sit here!"
And pointed to the prow, and took *her* seat
Beside the rudder with opposing feet.

And down the streams which clove those mountains vast
Around their inland islets, and amid
The panther-peopled forests, whose shade cast
Darkness and odours, and a pleasure hid
In melancholy gloom, the pinnace past'd;
By many a star-surrounded pyramid
Of icy crag cleaving the purple sky,
And caverns yawning round unfathomably.

The silver noon into that winding dell,
With slanted gleam athwart the forest tops,
Tempered like golden evening, feebly fell;
A green and glowing light, like that which drops
From folded lilies in which glow-worms dwell,
When earth over her face night's mantle wraps;
Between the severed mountains lay on high
Over the stream, a narrow rift of sky.

And ever as she went, the Image lay
With folded wings and unawakened eyes;
And o'er its gentle countenance did play
The busy dreams, as thick as summer flies,
Chasing the rapid smiles that would not stay,
And drinking the warm tears, and the sweet sighs
Inhaling, which, with busy murmur vain,
They had aroused from that full heart and brain.

And ever down the prone vale, like a cloud
Upon a stream of wind, the pinnace went:

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Now lingering on the pools, in which abode
The calm and darkness of the deep content
In which they paused; now o'er the shallow road
Of white and dancing waters all besprent
With sand and polished pebbles:—mortal boat
In such a shallow rapid could not float.

And down the earthquaking cataracts which shiver
Their snow-like waters into golden air,
Or under chasms unfathomable ever
Sepulchre them, till in their rage they tear
A subterranean portal for the river,
It fled—the circling sunbows did upbear
Its fall down the hoar precipice of spray,
Lighting it far upon its lampless way.

And when the wizard lady would ascend
The labyrinths of some many winding vale,
Which to the inmost mountain upward tend—
She called "Hermaphroditus!" and the pale
And heavy hue which slumber could extend
Over its lips and eyes, as on the gale
A rapid shadow from a slope of grass,
Into the darkness of the stream did pass.

And it unfurled its heaven-coloured pinions,
With stars of fire spotting the stream below;
And from above into the Sun's dominions
Flinging a glory, like the golden glow
In which spring clothes her emerald-winged minions,
All interwoven with fine feathery snow
And moonlight splendour of intensest rime,
With which frost paints the pines in winter time.

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And then it winnowed the Elysian air
Which ever hung about that lady bright,
With its ethereal vans—and speeding there,
Like a star up the torrent of the night,
Or a swift eagle in the morning glare
Breasting the whirlwind with impetuous flight;
The pinnace, oared by those enchanted wings,
Clove the fierce streams towards their upper springs.

The water flashed like sunlight, by the prow
Of a noon-wandering meteor flung to Heaven;
The still air seemed as if its waves did flow
In tempest down the mountains,—loosely driven
The lady's radiant hair streamed to and fro:
Beneath, the billows having vainly striven
Indignant and impetuous, roared to feel
The swift and steady motion of the keel.

Or, when the weary moon was in the wane,
Or in the noon of interlunar night,
The lady-witch in visions could not chain
Her spirit; but sailed forth under the light
Of shooting stars, and bade extend amain
His storm-outspeeding wings, th' Hermaphrodite;
She to the Austral waters took her way,
Beyond the fabulous Thamondocona.

Where, like a meadow which no scythe has shaven,
Which rain could never bend, or whirl-blast shake,
With the Antarctic constellations haven,
Canopus and his crew, lay th' Austral lake—
There she would build herself a windless haven
Out of the clouds whose moving turrets make

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The bastions of the storm, when through the sky
The spirits of the tempest thundered by.

A haven, beneath whose translucent floor
The tremulous stars sparkled unfathomably,
And around which, the solid vapours hoar,
Based on the level waters, to the sky
Lifted their dreadful crags; and like a shore
Of wintry mountains, inaccessibly
Hemmed in with rifts and precipices grey,
And hanging crags, many a cove and bay.

And whilst the outer lake beneath the lash
Of the winds' scourge, foamed like a wounded thing;
And the incessant hail with stony clash
Ploughed up the waters, and the flagging wing
Of the roused cormorant in the lightning flash
Looked like the wreck of some wind-wandering
Fragment of inky thunder smoke—this haven
Was as a gem to copy Heaven engraven.

On which that lady played her many pranks,
Circling the image of a shooting star,
Even as a tyger on Hydaspes' banks
Outspeeds the Antelopes with speediest are,
In her light boat; and many quips and cranks
She played upon the water; till the car
Of the late moon, like a sick matron wan,
To journey from the misty east began.

And then she called out of the hollow turrets
Of those high clouds, white, golden, and vermilion,
The armies of her ministering spirits—
In mighty legions million after million

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They came, each troop emblazoning its merits
On meteor flags; and many a proud pavilion,
Of the intertexture of the atmosphere,
They pitched upon the plain of the calm mere.

They framed the imperial tent of their great Queen
Of woven exhalations, underlaid
With lambent lightning-fire, as may be seen
A dome of thin and open ivory inlaid
With crimson silk—cressets from the serene
Hung there, and on the water for her tread,
A tapestry of fleece-like mist was strewn,
Dyed in the beams of the ascending moon.

And on a throne o'erlaid with starlight, caught
Upon those wandering isles of aëry dew,
Which highest shoals of mountain shipwreck not,
She sate, and heard all that had happened new
Between the earth and moon since they had brought
The last intelligence—and now she grew
Pale as that moon, lost in the watery night—
And now she wept, and now she laughed outright.

These were tame pleasures.—She would often climb
The steepest ladder of the crudded rack
Up to some beaked cape of cloud sublime,
And like Arion on the dolphin's back
Ride singing through the shoreless air. Oft time
Following the serpent lightning's winding track,
She ran upon the platforms of the wind,
And laughed to hear the fire-balls roar behind.

And sometimes to those streams of upper air,
Which whirl the earth in its diurnal round,

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She would ascend, and win the spirits there
To let her join their chorus. Mortals found
That on those days the sky was calm and fair,
And mystic snatches of harmonious sound
Wandered upon the earth where'er she pass'd,
And happy thoughts of hope, too sweet to last.

But her choice sport was, in the hours of sleep,
To glide adown old Nilus, when he threads
Egypt and Æthiopia, from the steep
Of utmost Axumé, until he spreads,
Like a calm flock of silver-fleeced sheep,
His waters on the plain: and crested heads
Of cities and proud temples gleam amid
And many a vapour-belted pyramid.

By Mœris and the Mareotid lakes,
Strewn with faint blooms like bridal chamber floors;
Where naked boys bridling tame water-snakes,
Or charioteering ghastly alligators,
Had left on the sweet waters mighty wakes
Of those huge forms:—within the brazen doors
Of the great Labyrinth slept both boy and beast,
Tired with the pomp of their Osirian feast.

And where within the surface of the river
The shadows of the massy temples lie,
And never are erased—but tremble ever
Like things which every cloud can doom to die,
Through lotus-pav'n canals, and wheresoever
The works of man pierced that serenest sky
With tombs, and towers, and fanes, 'twas her delight
To wander in the shadow of the night.

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With motion like the spirit of that wind
Whose soft step deepens slumber, her light feet
Past through the peopled haunts of human kind,
Scattering sweet visions from her presence sweet,
Through fane and palace-court and labyrinth mined
With many a dark and subterranean street
Under the Nile; through chambers high and deep
She past, observing mortals in their sleep.

A pleasure sweet doubtless it was to see
Mortals subdued in all the shapes of sleep.
Here lay two sister-twins in infancy;
There, a lone youth who in his dreams did weep;
Within, two lovers linked innocently
In their loose locks which over both did creep
Like ivy from one stem;—and there lay calm,
Old age with snow-bright hair and folded palm.

But other troubled forms of sleep she saw,
Not to be mirrored in a holy song,
Distortions foul of supernatural awe,
And pale imaginings of visioned wrong,
And all the code of custom's lawless law
Written upon the brows of old and young:
"This," said the wizard maiden, "is the strife
Which stirs the liquid surface of man's life."

And little did the sight disturb her soul—
We, the weak mariners of that wide lake
Where'er its shores extend or billows roll.
Our course unpiloted and starless make
O'er its wide surface to an unknown goal,—
But she in the calm depths her way could take,

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Where in bright bowers immortal forms abide,
Beneath the weltering of the restless tide.

And she saw princes couched under the glow
Of sunlike gems; and round each temple-court
In dormitories ranged, row after row,
She saw the priests asleep,—all of one sort,
For all were educated to be so.—
The peasants in their huts, and in the port
The sailors she saw cradled on the waves,
And the dead lulled within their dreamless graves.

And all the forms in which those spirits lay,
Were to her sight like the diaphanous
Veils, in which those sweet ladies oft array
Their delicate limbs, who would conceal from us
Only their scorn of all concealment: they
Move in the light of their own beauty thus.
But these, and all now lay with sleep upon them,
And little thought a Witch was looking on them.

She all those human figures breathing there
Beheld as living spirits—to her eyes
The naked beauty of the soul lay bare,
And often through a rude and worn disguise
She saw the inner form most bright and fair—
And then,—she had a charm of strange device,
Which murmured on mute lips with tender tone,
Could make that spirit mingle with her own.

Alas, Aurora! what wouldst thou have given
For such a charm, when Tithon became grey?
Or how much, Venus, of thy silver heaven
Wouldst thou have yielded, ere Proserpina

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Had half (oh! why not all?) the debt forgiven
Which dear Adonis had been doomed pay,
To any witch who would have taught you it?
The Heliad doth not know its value yet.

'Tis said in after times her spirit free
Knew what love was, and felt itself alone—
But holy Dian could not chaster be
Before she stooped to kiss Endymion,
Than now this lady—like a sexless bee
Tasting all blossoms, and confined to none—
Among those mortal forms, the wizard-maiden
Passed with an eye serene and heart unladen.

To those she saw most beautiful, she gave
Strange panacea in a chrystal bowl.
They drank in their deep sleep of that sweet wave,
And lived thenceforth as if some controul,
Mightier than life, were in them; and the grave
Of such, when death oppressed the weary soul,
Was a green and over arching bower
Lit by the gems of many a starry flower.

For on the night that they were buried, she
Restored the embalmers ruining, and shook
The light out of the funeral lamps, to be
A mimic day within that deathy nook;
And she unwound the woven imagery
Of second childhood's swaddling bands, and took
The coffin, its last cradle, from its niche,
And threw it with contempt into a ditch.

And there the body laid age after age,
Mute, breathing, beating, warm, and undecaying,

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Like one asleep in a green hermitage,
With gentle sleep about its eyelids playing,
And living in its dreams beyond the rage
Of death or life; while they were still arraying
In liveries ever new the rapid, blind,
And fleeting generations of mankind.

And she would write strange dreams upon the brain
Of those who were less beautiful, and make
All harsh and crooked purposes more vain
Than in the desert is the serpent's wake
Which the sand covers,—all his evil gain
The miser in such dreams would rise and shake
Into a beggar's lap;—the lying scribe
Would his own lies betray with out a bribe.

The priests would write an explanation full,
Translating hieroglyphics into Greek,
How the god Apis really was a bull,
And nothing more; and bid the herald stick
The same against the temple doors, and pull
The old cant down; they licensed all to speak
Whate'er they thought of hawks, and cats, and geese,
By pastoral letters to each diocese.

The king would dress an ape up in his crown
And robes, and seat him on his glorious seat,
And on the right hand of the sunlike throne
Would place a gaudy mock-bird to repeat
The chatterings of the monkey.—Every one
Of the prone courtiers crawled to kiss the feet
Of their great Emperor when the morning came;
And kissed—alas, how many kiss the same!

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The soldiers dreamed that they were blacksmiths, and
Walked out of quarters in somnambulism,
Round the red anvils you might see them stand
Like Cyclopses in Vulcan's sooty abysm,
Beating their swords to ploughshares;—in a band
The jailors sent those of the liberal schism
Free through the streets of Memphis; much, I wis,
To the annoyance of king Amasis.

And timid lovers who had been so coy,
They hardly knew whether they loved or not,
Would rise out of their rest, and take sweet joy,
To the fulfilment of their inmost thought;
And when next day the maiden and the boy
Met one another, both, like sinners caught,
Blushed at the thing which each believed was done
Only in fancy—till the tenth moon shone;

And then the Witch would let them take no ill:
Of many thousand schemes which lovers find
The Witch found one,—and so they took their fill
Of happiness in marriage warm and kind.
Friends who, by practice of some envious skill,
Where torn apart, a wide wound, mind from mind!
She did unite again with visions clear
Of deep affection and of truth sincere.

These where the pranks she played among the cities
Of mortal men, and what she did to sprites
And Gods, entangling them in her sweet ditties
To do her will, and show their subtle slights,
I will declare another time; for it is
A tale more fit for the weird winter nights—
Than for these garish summer days, when we
Scarcely believe much more than we can see.

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LETTER TO ———

Leghorn, July 1, 1820.

The spider spreads her webs, whether she be
In poet's tower, cellar, or barn, or tree;
The silkworm in the dark green mulberry leaves
His winding sheet and cradle ever weaves;
So I, a thing whom moralists call worm,
Sit spinning still round this decaying form,
From the fine threads of rare and subtle thought—
No net of words in garish colours wrought
To catch the idle buzzers of the day—
But a soft cell, where, when that fades away,
Memory may clothe in wings my living name
And feed it with the asphodels of fame,
Which in those hearts which most remember me
Grow, making love an immortality.

Whoever should behold me now, I wist,
Would think I were a mighty mechanist,
Bent with sublime Archimedean art
To breathe a soul into the iron heart
Of some machine portentous, or strange gin,
Which by the force of figured spells might win
Its way over the sea, and sport therein;
For round the walls are hung dread engines, such
As Vulcan never wrought for Jove to clutch
Ixion or the Titan:—or the quick
Wit of that man of God, St. Dominic,
To convince Atheist, Turk, or Heretic;

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Or those in philosophic councils met,
Who thought to pay some interest for the debt
They owed * * * *
By giving a faint foretaste of damnation
To Shakespear, Sidney, Spenser, and the rest
Who made our land an island of the blest,
When lamp-like Spain, who now relumes her fire
On freedom's hearth, grew dim with Empire:—
With thumbscrews, wheels, with tooth and spike and j
With fishes found under the utmost crag
Of Cornwall and the storm-encompassed isles,
Where to the sky the rude sea seldom smiles
Unless in treacherous wrath, as on the morn
When the exulting elements in scorn
Satiated with destroyed destruction, lay
Sleeping in beauty on their mangled prey,
As panthers sleep:—and other strange and dread
Magical forms the brick floor overspread——
Proteus transformed to metal did not make
More figures, or more strange; nor did he take
Such shapes of unintelligible brass,
Or heap himself in such a horrid mass
Of tin and iron not to be understood,
And forms of unimaginable wood,
To puzzle Tubal Cain and all his brood:
Great screws, and cones, and wheels, and grooved bl
The elements of what will stand the shocks
Of wave and wind and time.—Upon the table
More knacks and quips there be than I am able
To catalogize in this verse of mine:—
A pretty bowl of wood—not full of wine,
But quicksilver; that dew which the gnomes drink
When at their subterranean toil they swink,
Pledging the demons of the earthquake, who

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Reply to them in lava-cry, halloo!
And call out to the cities o'er their head,—
Roofs, towns, and shrines,—the dying and the dead
Crash through the chinks of earth—and then all quaff
Another rouse, and hold their sides and laugh.
This quicksilver no gnome has drunk—within
The walnut bowl it lies, veined and thin,
In colour like the wake of light that stains
The Tuscan deep, when from the moist moon rains
The inmost shower of it's white fire—the breeze
Is still—blue heaven smiles over the pale seas.
And in this bowl of quicksilver—for I
Yield to the impulse of an infancy
Outlasting manhood—I have made to float
A rude idealism of a paper boat—
A hollow screw with cogs—Henry will know
The thing I mean and laugh at me,—if so
He fears not I should do more mischief.—Next
Lie bills and calculations much perplext,
With steam-boats, frigates, and machinery quaint
Traced over them in blue and yellow paint.
Then comes a range of mathematical
Instruments, for plans nautical and statical,
A heap of rosin, a green broken glass
With ink in it;—a china cup that was
What it will never be again, I think,
A thing from which sweet lips were wont to drink
The liquor doctors rail at—and which I
Will quaff in spite of them—and when we die
We'll toss up who died first of drinking tea,
And cry out,—heads or tails? where'er we be.
Near that a dusty paint box, some old hooks,
A half burnt match, an ivory block, three books,
Where conic sections, spherics, logarithms,

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To great Laplace, from Saunderson and Sims,
Lie heaped in their harmonious disarray
Of figures,—disentangle them who may.
Baron de Tott's memoirs beside them lie,
And some odd volumes of old chemistry.
Near them a most inexplicable thing,
With least in the middle—I'm conjecturing
How to make Henry understand;—but—no,
I'll leave, as Spencer says, with many mo,
This secret in the pregnant womb of time,
Too vast a matter for so weak a rhyme.

And here like some weird Archimage sit I,
Plotting dark spells, and devilish enginery,
The self-impelling steam-wheels of the mind
Which pump up oaths from clergymen, and grind
The gentle spirit of our meek reviews
Into a powdery foam of salt abuse,
Ruffling the ocean of their self content;—
I sit—and smile or sigh as is my bent,
But not for them—Libeccio rushes round
With an inconstant and an idle sound,
I heed him more than them—the thunder-smoke
Is gathering on the mountains, like a cloak
Folded athwart their shoulders broad and bare;
The ripe corn under the undulating air
Undulates like an ocean;—and the vines
Are trembling wide in all their trelliced lines—
The murmur of the awakening sea doth fill
The empty pauses of the blast;—the hill
Looks hoary through the white electric rain,
And from the glens beyond, in sullen strain
The interrupted thunder howls; above
One chasm of heaven smiles, like the age of love

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On the unquiet world;—while such things are,
How could one worth your friendship heed the war
Of worms? The shriek of the world's carrion jays,
Their censure, or their wonder, or their praise?

You are not here! The quaint witch Memory sees
In vacant chairs your absent images,
And points where once you sat, and now should be
But are not.—I demand if ever we
Shall meet as then we met;—and she replies,
Veiling in awe her second-sighted eyes,
"I know the past alone—but summon home
"My sister Hope, she speaks of all to come"
But I, an old diviner, who know well
Every false verse of that sweet oracle,
Turned to the sad enchantress once again,
And sought a respite from my gentle pain,
In acting every passage o'er and o'er
Of our communion.—How on the sea shore
We watched the ocean and the sky together,
Under the roof of blue Italian weather;
How I ran home through last year's thunder storm,
And felt the transverse lightning linger warm
Upon my cheek:—and how we often made
Treats for each other, where good will outweighed
The frugal luxury of our country cheer,
As it well might, were it less firm and clear
Than ours must ever be;—and how we spun
A shroud of talk to hide us from the sun
Of this familiar life, which seems to be
But is not,—or is but quaint mockery
Of all we would believe; or sadly blame
The jarring and inexplicable frame
Of this wrong world:—and then anatomize

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The purposes and thoughts of men whose eyes
Were closed in distant years;—or widely guess
The issue of the earth's great business,
When we shall be as we no longer are;
Like babbling gossips safe, who hear the war
Of winds, and sigh, but tremble not; or how
You listened to some interrupted flow
Of visionary rhyme;—in joy and pain
Struck from the inmost fountains of my brain,
With little skill perhaps;—or how we sought
Those deepest wells of passion or of thought
Wrought by wise poets in the waste of years,
Staining the sacred waters with our tears;
Quenching a thirst ever to be renewed!
Or how I, wisest lady! then indued
The language of a land which now is free,
And winged with thoughts of truth and majesty,
Flits round the tyrant's sceptre like a cloud,
And bursts the peopled prisons, and cries aloud,
"My name is Legion!"—that majestic tongue
Which Calderon over the desert flung
Of ages and of nations; and which found
An echo in our hearts, and with the sound
Startled oblivion;—thou wert then to me
As is a nurse—when inarticulately
A child would talk as its grown parents do.
If living winds the rapid clouds pursue,
If hawks chase doves through the aerial way,
Huntsmen the innocent deer, and beasts their prey,
Why should not we rouse with the spirit's blast
Out of the forest of the pathless past
These recollected pleasures?

You are now
In London, that great sea, whose ebb and flow

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At once is deaf and loud, and on the shore
Vomits its wrecks, and still howls on for more.
Yet in its depth what treasures! You will see
* * * * * * * *
You will see C——; he who sits obscure
In the exceeding lustre and the pure
Intense irradiation of a mind,
Which, with its own internal lustre blind,
Flags wearily through darkness and despair—
A cloud-encircled meteor of the air,
A hooded eagle among blinking owls.
You will see H—t; one of those happy souls
Which are the salt of the earth, and without whom
This world would smell like what it is—a tomb;
Who is, what others seem;—his room no doubt
Is still adorned by many a cast from Shout,
With graceful flowers, tastefully placed about;
And coronals of bay from ribbons hung,
And brighter wreaths in neat disorder flung,
The gifts of the most learn'd among some dozens
Of female friends, sisters-in-law and cousins.
And there is he with his eternal puns,
Which beat the dullest brain for smiles, like duns
Thundering for money at a poet's door;
Alas! it is no use to say, "I'm poor!"
Or oft in graver mood, when he will look
Things wiser than were ever said in book,
Except in Shakespear's wisest tenderness.
You will see H—, and I cannot express
His virtues, though I know that they are great,
Because he locks, then barricades, the gate
Within which they inhabit;—of his wit
And wisdom, you'll cry out when you are bit.
He is a pearl within an oister shell,

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One of the richest of the deep. And there
Is English P—with his mountain Fair
Turned into a Flamingo,—that shy bird
That gleams i'the Indian air. Have you not heard
When a man marries, dies, or turns Hindoo,
His best friends hear no more of him? but you
Will see him and will like him too, I hope,
With the milk-white Snowdonian Antelope
Matched with this cameleopard; his fine wit
Makes such a wound, the knife is lost in it;
A strain too learned for a shallow age,
Too wise for selfish bigots;—let his page
Which charms the chosen spirits of the age,
Fold itself up for a serener clime
Of years to come, and find its recompence
In that just expectation. Wit and sense,
Virtue and human knowledge, all that might
Make this dull world a business of delight,
Are all combined in H. S.—And these,
With some exceptions, which I need not teaze
Your patience by decanting on, are all,
You and I know in London.

I recal
My thoughts and bid you look upon the night.
As water does a sponge, so the moonlight
Fills the void, hollow, universal air.
What see you?—Unpavilioned heaven is fair,
Whither the moon, into her chamber gone,
Leaves midnight to the golden stars, or wan
Climbs with diminished beams the azure steep;
Or whether clouds sail o'er the inverse deep,
Piloted by the many wandering blast,
And the rare stars rush through them, dim and fast.
All this is beautiful in every land.

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But what see you beside? A shabby stand
Of hackney-coaches—a brick house or wall,
Fencing some lonely court, white with the scrawl
Of our unhappy politics;—or worse—
A wretched woman reeling by, whose curse
Mixed with the watchman's, partner of her trade,
You must accept in place of serenade—

I see a chaos of green leaves and fruit
Built round dark caverns, even to the root
Of the living stems who feed them; in whose bowers
There sleep in their dark dew the folded flowers;
Beyond, the surface of the unsickled corn
Trembles not in the slumbering air, and borne
In circles quaint, and ever changing dance,
Like winged stars the fire-flies flash and glance
Pale in the open moonshine; but each one
Under the dark trees seems a little sun,
A meteor tamed; a fixed star gone astray
From the silver regions of the milky way.
Afar the Contadino's song is heard,
Rude, but made sweet by distance;—and a bird
Which cannot be a nightingale, and yet
I know none else that sings so sweet as it
At this late hour;—and then all is still:—
Now Italy or London, which you will!

Next winter you must pass with me; I'll have
My house by that time turned into a grave
Of dead despondence and low-thoughted care,
And all the dreams which our tormentors are.
Oh that H —— —— and ———— were there,
With every thing belonging to them fair!—
We will have books; Spanish, Italian, Greek,

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* * * * * *
* * * * *
* * * * *

Though we eat little flesh and drink no wine,
Yet let's be merry; we'll have tea and toast;
Custards for supper, and an endless host
Of syllabubs and jellies and mince-pies,
And other such lady-like luxuries,—
Feasting on which we will philosophise.
And we'll have fires out of the Grand Duke's wood,
To thaw the six weeks winter in our blood.
And then we'll talk;—what shall we talk about?
Oh! there are themes enough for many a bout
Of thought-entangled descant;—as to nerves
With cones and parallelograms and curves,
I've sworn to strangle them if once they dare
To bother me,—when you are with me there.
And they shall never more sip laudanum
From Helicon or Himeros;*—we'll come
And in despite of * * * and of the devil,
Will make our friendly philosophic revel
Outlast the leafless time;—till buds and flowers
Warn the obscure inevitable hours
Sweet meeting by sad parting to renew:—
"To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new."

* Ἵμερος, from which the river Himera was named, is, with some slight shade of difference, a synonyme of Love.

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THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE.

Swift as a spirit hastening to his task
Of glory and of good, the sun sprang forth
Rejoicing in his splendour, and the mask

Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth—
The smokeless altars of the mountain snows
Flamed above crimson clouds, and at the birth

Of light, the Ocean's orison arose,
To which the birds tempered their matin lay.
All flowers in field or forest which unclose

Their trembling eyelids to the kiss of day,
Swinging their censers in the element,
With orient incense lit by the new ray

Burned slow and inconsumably, and sent
Their odorous sighs up to the smiling air;
And, in succession due, did continent,

Isle, ocean, and all things that in them wear
The form and character of mortal mould,
Rise as the sun their father rose, to bear

Their portion of the toil, which he of old
Took as his own and then imposed on them:
But I, whom thoughts which must remain untold

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Had kept as wakeful as the stars that gem
The cone of night, now they were laid asleep
Stretched my faint limbs beneath the hoary stem

Which an old chesnut flung athwart the steep
Of a green Apennine: before me fled
The night; behind me rose the day; the deep

Was at my feet, and Heaven above my head,
When a strange trance over my fancy grew
Which was not slumber, for the shade it spread

Was so transparent, that the scene came through
As clear as when a veil of light is drawn
O'er evening hills they glimmer; and I knew

That I had felt the freshness of that dawn,
Bathed in the same cold dew my brow and hair,
And sate as thus upon that slope of lawn

Under the self-same bough, and heard as there
The birds, the fountains, and the ocean hold
Sweet talk in music through the enamoured air,
And then a vision on my brain was rolled.

As in that trance of wondrous thought I lay,
This was the tenour of my waking dream:—
Methought I sate beside a public way

Thick strewn with summer dust, and a great stream
Of people there was hurring to and fro,
Numerous as gnats upon the evening gleam,

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All hastening onward, yet none seemed to know
Whither he went, or whence he came, or why
He made one of the multitude, and so

Was borne amid the crowd, as through the sky
One of the million leaves of summer's bier;
Old age and youth, manhood and infancy

Mixed in one mighty torrent did appear,
Some flying from the thing they feared, and some
Seeking the object of another's fear;

And others as with steps towards the tomb,
Pored on the trodden worms that crawled beneath,
And others mournfully within the gloom

Of their own shadow walked and called it death;
And some fled from it as it were a ghost,
Half fainting in the affliction of vain breath:

But more with motions, which each other crost,
Pursued or spurned the shadows the clouds threw,
Or birds within the noon-day ether lost,

Upon that path where flowers never grew,
And weary with vain toil and faint for thirst,
Heard not the fountains, whose melodious dew

Out of their mossy cells for ever burst;
Nor felt the breeze which from the forest told
Of grassy paths and wood, lawn-interspersed,

With over-arching elms and caverns cold,
And violet banks where sweet dreams brood, but they
Pursued their serious folly as of old.

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And as I gazed, methought that in the way
The throng grew wilder, as the woods of June
When the south wind shakes the extinguished day,

And a cold glare, intenser than the noon,
But icy cold, obscured with [blinding] light
The sun, as he the stars. Like the young moon

When on the sunlit limits of the night
Her white shell trembles amid crimson air,
And whilst the sleeping tempest gathers might,

Doth, as the herald of its coming, bear
The ghost of its dead mother, whose dim frown
Bends in dark ether from her infant's chair,—

So came a chariot on the silent storm
Of its own rushing splendour, and a Shape
So sate within, as one whom years deform,

Beneath a dusky hood and double cape,
Crouching within the shadow of a tomb,
And o'er what seemed the head a cloud-like crape

Was bent, a dun and faint etherial gloom
Tempering the light upon the chariot beam;
A Janus-visaged shadow did assume

The guidance of that wonder-winged team;
The shapes which drew it in thick lightnings
Were lost:—I heard alone on the air's soft stream

The music of their ever-moving wings.
All the four faces of that charioteer
Had their eyes banded; little profit brings

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Speed in the van and blindness in the rear,
Nor then avail the beams that quench the sun
Or that with banded eyes could pierce the sphere

Of all that is, has been, or will be done;
So ill was the car guided—but it past
With solemn speed majestically on.

The crowd gave way, and I arose aghast,
Or seemed to rise, so mighty was the trance,
And saw, like clouds upon the thunders blast,

The million with fierce song and maniac dance
Raging around—such seemed the jubilee
As when to meet some conqueror's advance

Imperial Rome poured forth her living sea
From senate house, and forum, and theatre,
When [ ] upon the free

Had bound a yoke, which soon they stooped to bear.
Nor wanted here the just similitude
Of a triumphal pageant, for where'er

The chariot rolled, a captive multitude
Was driven;—all those who had grown old in power
Or misery,—all who had their age subdued

By action or by suffering, and whose hour
Was drained to its last sand in weal or woe,
So that the trunk survived both fruit and flower;—

All those whose fame or infamy must grow
Till the great winter lay the form and name
Of this green earth with them for ever low;—

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All but the sacred few who could not tame
Their spirits to the conquerors—but as soon
As they had touched the world with living flame,

Fled back like eagles to their native noon,
Or those who put aside the diadem
Of earthly thrones or gems [ ]

Were there, of Athens or Jerusalem,
Were neither mid the mighty captives seen,
Nor mid the ribald crowd that followed them,

Nor those who went before fierce and obscene.
The wild dance maddens in the van, and those
Who lead it—fleet as shadows on the green,

Outspeed the chariot, and without repose
Mix with each other in tempestuous measure
To savage music, wilder as it grows,

They, tortured by their agonizing pleasure,
Convulsed and on the rapid whirlwinds spun
Of that fierce spirit, whose unholy leisure

Was soothed by mischief since the world begun,
Throw back their heads and loose their streaming hair;
And in their dance round her who dims the sun,

Maidens and youths fling their wild arms in air
As their feet twinkle; they recede, and now
Bending within each other's atmosphere

Kindle invisibly—and as they glow,
Like moths by light attracted and repelled,
Oft to their bright destruction come and go,

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Till like two clouds into one vale impelled
That shake the mountains when their lightnings mingle
And die in rain—the fiery band which held

Their natures, snaps—the shock still may tingle;
One falls and then another in the path
Senseless—nor is the desolation single,

Yet ere I can say *where*—the chariot hath
Past over them—nor other trace I find
But as of foam after the ocean's wrath

Is spent upon the desert shore;—behind,
Old men and women foully disarrayed,
Shake their grey hairs in the insulting wind,

To seek, to [ ], to strain with limbs decayed,
Limping to reach the light which leaves them still
Farther behind and deeper in the shade.

But not the less with impotence of will
They wheel, though ghastly shadows interpose
Round them and round each other, and fulfil

Their work, and in the dust from whence they rose
Sink, and corruption veils them as they lie,
And past in these performs what [ ] in those.

Struck to the heart by this sad pageantry,
Half to myself I said—And what is this?
Whose shape is that within the car? And why—

I would have added—is all here amiss?—
But a voice answered—"Life!"—I turned, and knew
(O Heaven, have mercy on such wretchedness!)

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That what I thought was an old root which grew
To strange distortion out of the hill side,
Was indeed one of those deluded crew,

And that the grass, which methought hung so wide
And white, was but his thin discoloured hair,
And that the holes it vainly sought to hide,

Were or had been eyes:—"If thou canst, forbear
To join the dance, which I had well foreborne!"
Said the grim Feature of my thought: "Aware,

"I will unfold that which to this deep scorn
Led me and my companions, and relate
The progress of the pageant since the morn;

"If thirst of knowledge shall not then abate,
Follow it thou even to the night, but I
Am weary."—Then like one who with the weight

Of his own words is staggered, wearily
He paused; and, ere he could resume, I cried:
"First, who art thou?"—"Before thy memory,

"I feared, loved, hated, suffered, did and died,
And if the spark with which Heaven lit my spirit
Had been with purer sentiment supplied,

"Corruption would not now thus much inherit
Of what was once Rousseau,—nor this disguise
Stained that which ought to have disdained to wear it;

"If I have been extinguished, yet there rise
A thousand beacons from the spark I bore"—
"And who are those chained to the car?"—"The wise,

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"The great, the unforgotten,—they who wore
Mitres and helms and crowns, or wreaths of light,
Signs of thought's empire over thought—their lore

"Taught them not this, to know themselves; their might
Could not repress the mystery within,
And for the morn of truth they feigned, deep night

"Caught them ere evening."—"Who is he with chin
Upon his breast, and hands crost on his chain?"—
"The Child of a fierce hour; he sought to win

"The world, and lost all that it did contain
Of greatness, in its hope destroyed; and more
Of fame and peace than virtue's self can gain

"Without the opportunity which bore
Him on its eagle pinions to the peak
From which a thousand climbers have before

"Fall'n, as Napoleon fell."—I felt my cheek
Alter, to see the shadow pass away
Whose grasp had left the giant world so weak,

That every pigmy kicked it as it lay;
And much I grieved to think how power and will
In opposition rule our mortal day,

And why God made irreconcilable
Good and the means of good; and for despair
I half disdained mine eyes' desire to fill

With the spent vision of the times that were
And scarce have ceased to be.—"Dost thou behold,"
Said my guide, "those spoilers spoiled, Voltaire,

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" Frederic, and Paul, Catherine, and Leopold,
And hoary anarchs, demagogues, and sage—
—— name the world thinks always old,

" For in the battle life and they did wage,
She remained conqueror. I was overcome
By my own heart alone, which neither age,

" Nor tears, nor infamy, nor now the tomb
Could temper to its object."—" Let them pass,"
I cried, " the world and its mysterious doom

" Is not so much more glorious than it was,
That I desire to worship those who drew
New figures on its false and fragile glass

" As the old faded."—" Figures ever new
Rise on the bubble, paint them as you may;
We have but thrown, as those before us threw,

" Our shadows on it as it past away.
But mark how chained to the triumphal chair
The mighty phantoms of an elder day;

" All that is mortal of great Plato there
Expiates the joy and woe his master knew not:
The star that ruled his doom was far too fair,

" And life, where long that flower of Heaven grew not,
Conquered that heart by love, which gold, or pain,
Or age, or sloth, or slavery, could subdue not.

" And near walk the [ ] twain,
The tutor and his pupil, whom Dominion
Followed as tame as vulture in a chain.

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" The world was darkened beneath either pinion
Of him whom from the flock of conquerors
Fame singled out for her thunder-bearing minion;

" The other long outlived both woes and wars,
Throned in the thoughts of men, and still had kept
The jealous key of truth's eternal doors,

" If Bacon's eagle spirit had not leapt
Like lightning out of darkness—he compelled
The Proteus shape of Nature as it slept

" To wake, and lead him to the caves that held
The treasure of the secrets of its reign.
See the great bards of elder time, who quelled

" The passions which they sung, as by their strain
May well be known: their living melody
Tempers its own contagion to the vein

" Of those who are infected with it—I
Have suffered what I wrote, or viler pain!
And so my words have seeds of misery"——

* * * * * * *
* * * * * * * *
* * * * * * *

[There is a chasm here in the MS. which it is impossible to fill up. It appears from the context, that other shapes pass, and that Rousseau still stood beside the dreamer, as]

——— he pointed to a company,
Midst whom I quickly recognised the heirs
Of Cæsar's crime, from him to Constantine;
The anarch chiefs, whose force and murderous snares

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Had founded many a sceptre-bearing line,
And spread the plague of gold and blood abroad:
And Gregory and John, and men divine,

Who rose like shadows between man and God;
Till that eclipse, still hanging over heaven,
Was worshipped by the world o'er which they strode,

For the true sun it quenched—"Their power was given
But to destroy," replied the leader:—"I
Am one of those who have created, even

"If it be but a world of agony."—
"Whence comest thou? and whither goest thou?
How did thy course begin?" I said, "and why?

"Mine eyes are sick of this perpetual flow
Of people, and my heart sick of one sad thought—
Speak!"—"Whence I am, I partly seem to know,

"And how and by what paths I have been brought
To this dread pass, methinks even thou mayst guess;—
Why this should be, my mind can compass not;

"Whither the conqueror hurries me, still less;—
But follow thou, and from spectator turn
Actor or victim in this wretchedness,

"And what thou wouldst be taught I then may learn
From thee. Now listen:—In the April prime,
When all the forest tips began to burn

"With kindling green, touched by the azure clime
Of the young year's dawn, I was laid asleep
Under a mountain, which from unknown time

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" Had yawned into a cavern, high and deep;
And from it came a gentle rivulet,
Whose water, like clear air, in its calm sweep

" Bent the soft grass, and kept for ever wet
The stems of the sweet flowers, and filled the grove
With sounds, which whoso hears must needs forget

" All pleasure and all pain, all hate and love,
Which they had known before that hour of rest;
A sleeping mother then would dream not of

" Her only child who died upon her breast
At eventide—a king would mourn no more
The crown of which his brows were dispossest

" When the sun lingered o'er his ocean floor,
To gild his rival's new prosperity.
Thou wouldst forget thus vainly to deplore

" Ills, which if ills can find no cure from thee,
The thought of which no other sleep will quell,
Nor other music blot from memory,

" So sweet and deep is the oblivious spell;
And whether life had been before that sleep
The heaven which I imagine, or a hell

" Like this harsh world in which I wake to weep,
I know not. I arose, and for a space
The scene of woods and waters seemed to keep,

" Though it was now broad day, a gentle trace
Of light diviner than the common sun
Sheds on the common earth, and all the place

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" Was filled with magic sounds woven into one
Oblivious melody, confusing sense
Amid the gliding waves and shadows dun;

" And, as I looked, the bright omnipresence
Of morning through the orient cavern flowed,
And the sun's image radiantly intense

" Burned on the waters of the well that glowed
Like gold, and threaded all the forest's maze
With winding paths of emerald fire; there stood

" Amid the sun, as he amid the blaze
Of his own glory, on the vibrating
Floor of the fountain, paved with flashing rays

" A Shape all light, which with one hand did fl
Dew on the earth, as if she were the dawn,
And the invisible rain did ever sing

" A silver music on the mossy lawn;
And still before me on the dusky grass,
Iris her many-coloured scarf had drawn:

" In her right hand she bore a crystal glass,
Mantling with bright Nepenthe; the fierce spl
Fell from her as she moved under the mass

" Out of the deep cavern, with palms so tende
Their tread broke not the mirror of its billow;
She glided along the river, and did bend her

" Head under the dark boughs, till, like a will
Her fair hair swept the bosom of the stream
That whispered with delight to be its pillow.

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"As one enamoured is upborne in dream
O'er lily-paven lakes mid silver mist,
To wondrous music, so this shape might seem

"Partly to tread the waves with feet which kissed
The dancing foam; partly to glide along
The air which roughened the moist amethyst,

"Or the faint morning beams that fell among
The trees, or the soft shadows of the trees;
And her feet, ever to the ceaseless song

"Of leaves, and winds, and waves, and birds, and bees,
And falling drops, moved to a measure new
Yet sweet, as on the summer evening breeze,

"Up from the lake a shape of golden dew
Between two rocks, athwart the rising moon,
Dances i' the wind, where never eagle flew;

"And still her feet, no less than the sweet tune
To which they moved, seemed as they moved to blot
The thoughts of him who gazed on them; and soon

"All that was, seemed as if it had been not;
And all the gazer's mind was strewn beneath
Her feet like embers; and she, thought by thought,

"Trampled its sparks into the dust of death;
As day upon the threshold of the east
Treads out the lamps of night, until the breath

"Of darkness re-illumine even the least
Of heaven's living eyes—like day she came,
Making the night a dream; and ere she ceased

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" To move, as one between desire and shame
Suspended, I said—If, as it doth seem,
Thou comest from the realm without a name,

" Into this valley of perpetual dream,
Show whence I came, and where I am, and why—
Pass not away upon the passing stream.

" Arise and quench thy thirst," was her reply.
And as a shut lily, stricken by the wand
Of dewy morning's vital alchemy,

" I rose; and, bending at her sweet command,
Touched with faint lips the cup she raised,
And suddenly my brain became as sand

" Where the first wave had more than half erased
The track of deer on desert Labrador;
Whilst the wolf, from which they fled amazed,

" Leaves his stamp visibly upon the shore,
Until the second bursts;—so on my sight
Burst a new vision, never seen before,

" And the fair shape waned in the coming light,
As veil by veil the silent splendour drops
From Lucifer, amid the chrysolite

" Of sun-rise, ere it tinge the mountain tops;
And as the presence of that fairest planet,
Although unseen, is felt by one who hopes

" That his day's path may end as he began it,
In that star's smile, whose light is like the scent
Of a jonquil when evening breezes fan it,

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"Or the soft note in which his dear lament
The Brescian shepherd breathes, or the caress
That turned his weary slumber to content;*

"So knew I in that light's severe excess
The presence of that shape which on the stream
Moved, as I moved along the wilderness,

"More dimly than a day-appearing dream,
The ghost of a forgotten form of sleep;
A light of heaven, whose half-extinguished beam

"Through the sick day in which we wake to weep,
Glimmers, for ever sought, for ever lost;
So did that shape its obscure tenour keep

"Beside my path, as silent as a ghost;
But the new Vision, and the cold bright car,
With solemn speed and stunning music, crost

"The forest, and as if from some dread war
Triumphantly returning, the loud million
Fiercely extolled the fortune of her star.

"A moving arch of victory, the vermilion
And green and azure plumes of Iris had
Built high over her wind-winged pavilion,

"And underneath etherial glory clad
The wilderness, and far before her flew
The tempest of the splendour, which forbade

* The favorite song, "Stanco di pascolar le peccorelle," is a Brescian national air.

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"Shadow to fall from leaf and stone; the crew
Seemed in that light, like atomies to dance
Within a sunbeam;—some upon the new

"Embroidery of flowers, that did enhance
The grassy vesture of the desert, played,
Forgetful of the chariot's swift advance;

"Others stood gazing, till within the shade
Of the great mountain its light left them dim;
Others outspeeded it; and others made

"Circles around it, like the clouds that swim
Round the high moon in a bright sea of air;
And more did follow, with exulting hymn,

"The chariot and the captives fettered there:—
But all like bubbles on an eddying flood
Fell into some track at last, and were

"Borne onward. I among the multitude
Was swept—me, sweetest flowers delayed not long;
Me, not the shadow nor the solitude;

"Me, not that falling stream's Lethean song;
Me, not the phantom of that early form,
Which moved upon its motion—but among

"The thickest billows of that living storm
I plunged, and bared my bosom to the clime
Of that cold light, whose airs too soon deform.

"Before the chariot had begun to climb
The opposing steep of that mysterious dell,
Behold a wonder worthy of the rhyme

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"Of him who from the lowest depths of hell,
Through every paradise and through all glory,
Love led serene, and who returned to tell

"The words of hate and care; the wondrous story
How all things are transfigured except Love;
For deaf as is a sea, which wrath makes hoary,

"The world can hear not the sweet notes that move
The sphere whose light is melody to lovers—
A wonder worthy of his rhyme—the grove

"Grew dense with shadows to its inmost covers,
The earth was grey with phantoms, and the air
Was peopled with dim forms, as when there hovers

"A flock of vampire-bats before the glare
Of the tropic sun, bringing, ere evening,
Strange night upon some Indian vale;—thus were

"Phantoms diffused around; and some did fling
Shadows of shadows, yet unlike themselves,
Behind them; some like eaglets on the wing

"Were lost in the white day; others like elves
Danced in a thousand unimagined shapes
Upon the sunny streams and grassy shelves;

"And others sate chattering like restless apes
On vulgar hands, * * * * *
Some made a cradle of the ermined capes

"Of kingly mantles; some across the tire
Of pontiffs rode, like demons; others played
Under the crown which girt with empire

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" A baby's or an idiot's brow, and made
Their nests in it. The old anatomies
Sate hatching their bare broods under the shade

" Or demon wings, and laughed from their dead eyes
To reassume the delegated power,
Array'd in which those worms did monarchize,

" Who made this earth their charnel. Others more
Humble, like falcons, sate upon the fist
Of common men, and round their heads did soar;

" Or like small gnats and flies, as thick as mist
On evening marshes, thronged about the brow
Of lawyers, statesmen, priest, and theorist;—

" And others, like discoloured flakes of snow
On fairest bosoms and the sunniest hair,
Fell, and were melted by the youthful glow

" Which they extinguished; and, like tears, they were
A veil to those from whose faint lids they rained
In drops of sorrow. I became aware

" Of whence those forms proceeded which thus stained
The track in which we moved. After brief space,
From every form the beauty slowly waned;

" From every firmest limb and fairest face
The strength and freshness fell like dust, and left
The action and the shape without the grace

" Of life. The marble brow of youth was cleft
With care; and in those eyes where once hope shone,
Desire, like a lioness bereft

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"Of her last cub, glared ere it died; each one
Of that great crowd sent forth incessantly
These shadows, numerous as the dead leaves blown

"In autumn evening from a polar tree,
Each like himself and like each other were
At first; but some distorted seemed to be

"Obscure clouds, moulded by the casual air;
And of this stuff the car's creative ray
Wrapt all the busy phantoms that were there,

"As the sun shapes the clouds; thus on the way
Mask after mask fell from the countenance
And form of all; and long before the day

"Was old, the joy which waked like heaven's glance
The sleepers in the oblivious valley, died;
And some grew weary of the ghastly dance,

"And fell, as I have fallen, by the way side;—
Those soonest from whose forms most shadows past,
And least of strength and beauty did abide.

"Then, what is life? I cried."—

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FRAGMENTS

FROM AN UNFINISHED DRAMA.

He came like a dream in the dawn of life,
He fled like a shadow before its noon;
He is gone, and my peace is turned to strife,
And I wander and wane like the weary moon.
O sweet Echo, wake,
And for my sake
Make answer the while my heart shall break!

But heart has a music which Echo's lips,
Though tender and true, yet can answer not,
And the shadow that moves in the soul's eclipse
Can return not the kiss by his now forgot;
Sweet lips! he who hath
On my desolate path
Cast the darkness of absence, worse than death!

Indian. And if my grief should still be dearer to me
Than all the pleasure in the world beside,
Why would you lighten it?—
Lady. I offer only
That which I seek, some human sympathy
In this mysterious island.
The Indian. Oh! my friend,
My sister, my beloved! What do I say?
My brain is dizzy, and I scarce know whether
I speak to thee or her. Peace, perturbed heart!
I am to thee only as thou to mine.

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The passing wind which heals the brow at noon,
And may strike cold into the breast at night,
Yet cannot linger where it soothes the most,
Or long soothe could it linger. But you said
You also loved?

Lady. Loved! Oh, I love. Methinks
This word of love is fit for all the world,
And that for gentle hearts another name
Would speak of gentler thoughts than the world owns.
I have loved.

The Indian. And thou lovest not? If so
Young as thou art, thou canst afford to weep.

Lady. Oh! would that I could claim exemption
From all the bitterness of that sweet name.
I loved, I love, and when I love no more
Let joys and grief perish, and leave despair
To ring the knell of youth. He stood beside me,
The embodied vision of the brightest dream,
Which like a dawn heralds the day of life;
The shadow of his presence made my world
A paradise. All familiar things he touched,
All common words he spoke, became to me
Like forms and sounds of a diviner world.
He was as is the sun in his fierce youth,
As terrible and lovely as a tempest;
He came, and went, and left me what I am.
Alas! Why must I think how oft we two
Have sate together near the river springs,
Under the green pavilion which the willow
Spreads on the floor of the unbroken fountain,
Strewn by the nurslings that linger there,
Over that islet paved with flowers and moss,
While the musk-rose leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,

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Showered on us, and the dove mourned in the pine,
Sad prophetess of sorrows not our own.

Indian. Your breath is like soft music, your words are
The echoes of a voice which on my heart
Sleeps like a melody of early days.
But as you said—

Lady. He was so awful, yet
So beautiful in mystery and terror,
Calming me as the loveliness of heaven
Soothes the unquiet sea :—and yet not so,
For he seemed stormy, and would often seem
A quenchless sun masked in portentous clouds ;
For such his thoughts, and even his actions were ;
But he was not of them, nor they of him,
But as they hid his splendour from the earth.
Some said he was a man of blood and peril,
And steeped in bitter infamy to the lips.
More need was there I should be innocent,
More need that I should be most true and kind,
And much more need that there should be found one
To share remorse, and scorn, and solitude,
And all the ills that wait on those who do
The tasks of ruin in the world of life.
He fled, and I have followed him.

February, 1822.

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PRINCE ATHANASE.

A FRAGMENT.

There was a youth, who, as with toil and travel,
Had grown quite weak and grey before his time;
Nor any could the restless griefs unravel

Which burned within him, withering up his prime
And goading him, like fiends, from land to land.
Not his the load of any secret crime,

For nought of ill his heart could understand,
But pity and wild sorrow for the same;—
Not his the thirst for glory or command

Baffled with blast of hope-consuming shame;
Nor evil joys which fire the vulgar breast,
And quench in speedy smoke its feeble flame,

Had left within his soul their dark unrest:
Nor what religion fables of the grave
Feared he,—Philosophy's accepted guest.

For none than he a purer heart could have,
Or that loved good more for itself alone;
Of nought in heaven or earth was he the slave.

What sorrow deep, and shadowy, and unknown,
Sent him, a hopeless wanderer, through mankind?—
If with a human sadness he did groan,

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He had a gentle yet aspiring mind;
Just, innocent, with varied learning fed,
And such a glorious consolation find

In others' joy, when all their own is dead:
He loved, and laboured for his kind in grief,
And yet, unlike all others, it is said,

That from such toil he never found relief;
Although a child of fortune and of power,
Of an ancestral name the orphan chief.

His soul had wedded wisdom, and her dower
Is love and justice, clothed in which he sate
Apart from men, as in a lonely tower,

Pitying the tumult of their dark estate—
Yet even in youth did he not e'er abuse
The strength of wealth or thought, to consecrate

Those false opinions which the harsh rich use
To blind the world they famish for their pride;
Nor did he hold from any man his dues,

But like a steward in honest dealings tried
With those who toiled and wept, the poor and wise,
His riches and his cares he did divide.

Fearless he was, and scorning all disguise,
What he dared do or think, though men might start,
He spoke with mild yet unaverted eyes;

Liberal he was of soul, and frank of heart,
And to his many friends—all loved him well—
Whate'er he knew or felt he would impart,

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If words he found those inmost thoughts to tell;
If not, he smiled or wept; and his weak foes
He neither spurned nor hated, though with fell

And mortal hate their thousand voices rose,
They past like aimless arrows from his ear—
Nor did his heart or mind its portal close

To those, or them, or any, whom life's sphere
May comprehend within its wide array.
What sadness made that vernal spirit sere?

He knew not. Though his life day after day,
Was failing like an unreplenished stream,
Though in his eyes a cloud and burthen lay,

Through which his soul, like Vesper's serene beam
Piercing the chasms of ever rising clouds,
Shone, softly burning; though his lips did seem

Like reeds which quiver in impetuous floods;
And through his sleep, and o'er each waking hour,
Thoughts after thoughts, unresting multitudes,

Were driven within him, by some secret power,
Which bade them blaze, and live, and roll afar,
Like lights and sounds, from haunted tower to tower,

O'er castled mountains borne, when tempest's war
Is levied by the night-contending winds,
And the pale dalesmen watch with eager ear;—

Though such were in his spirit, as the fiends
Which wake and feed on everliving woe,—
What was this grief, which ne'er in other minds

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A mirror found,—he knew not—none could know;
But on whoe'er might question him he turned
The light of his frank eyes, as if to show

He knew not of the grief within that burned,
But asked forbearance with a mournful look;
Or spoke in words from which none ever learned

The cause of his disquietude; or shook
With spasms of silent passion; or turned pale:
So that his friends soon rarely undertook

To stir his secret pain without avail;—
For all who knew and loved him then perceived
That there was drawn an adamantine veil

Between his heart and mind,—both unrelieved
Wrought in his brain and bosom separate strife.
Some said that he was mad, others believed

That memories of an antenatal life
Made this, where now he dwelt, a penal hell:
And others said that such mysterious grief

From God's displeasure, like a darkness, fell
On souls like his which owned no higher law
Than love; love calm, steadfast, invincible

By mortal fear or supernatural awe;
And others,—"'Tis the shadow of a dream
Which the veiled eye of memory never saw

"But through the soul's abyss, like some dark stream
Through shattered mines and caverns underground
Rolls, shaking its foundations; and no beam

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" Of joy may rise, but it is quenched and drowned
In the dim whirlpools of this dream obscure,
Soon its exhausted waters will have found

" A lair of rest beneath thy spirit pure,
O Athanase !—in one so good and great,
Evil or tumult cannot long endure."

So spake they: idly of another's state
Babbling vain words and fond philosophy;
This was their consolation; such debate

Men held with one another; nor did he
Like one who labours with a human woe
Decline this talk; as if its theme might be

Another, not himself, he to and fro
Questioned and canvassed it with subtlest wit,
And none but those who loved him best could know

That which he knew not, how it galled and bit
His weary mind, this converse vain and cold;
For like an eyeless night-mare grief did sit

Upon his being; a snake which fold by fold
Pressed out the life of life, a clinging fiend
Which clenched him if he stirred with deadlier hold;—
And so his grief remained—let it remain—untold.*

* The Author was pursuing a fuller development of the ideal character of Athanase, when it struck him that in an attempt at extreme refinement and analysis, his conceptions might be betrayed into the assuming a morbid character. The reader will judge whether he is a loser or gainer by this difference.—*Author's Note.*

December, 1817.

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ODE TO NAPLES.*

EPODE I. *a*.

I stood within the city disinterred:†
And heard the autumnal leaves like light footfalls
Of spirits passing through the streets; and heard
The Mountain's slumberous voice at intervals
Thrill through those roofless halls;
The oracular thunder penetrating shook
The listening soul in my suspended blood;
I felt that Earth out of her deep heart spoke—
I felt, but heard not:—through white columns glowed
The isle-sustaining Ocean-flood,
A plane of light between two Heavens of azure:
Around me gleamed many a bright sepulchre
Of whose pure beauty, Time, as if his pleasure
Were to spare Death, had never made erasure;
But every living lineament was clear
As in the sculptor's thought; and there
The wreaths of stony myrtle, ivy, and pine,
Like winter leaves o'ergrown by moulded snow,
Seemed only not to move and grow
Because the crystal silence of the air
Weighed on their life; even as the Power divine
Which then lulled all things, brooded upon mine.

* The Author has connected many recollections of his visit to Pompeii and Baiæ with the enthusiasm excited by the intelligence of the proclamation of a Constitutional Government at Naples. This has given a tinge of picturesque and descriptive imagery to the introductory Epodes which depicture these scenes, and some of the majestic feelings permanently connected with the scene of this animating event.—*Author's Note.*

† Pompeii.

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EPODE II. α.

Then gentle winds arose
With many a mingled close
Of wild Æolian sound and mountain odour keen;
And where the Baian ocean
Welters with airlike motion
Within, above, around its bowers of starry green,
Moving the sea flowers in those purple caves
Even as the ever stormless atmosphere
Floats o'er the Elysian realm,
It bore me like an Angel o'er the waves
Of sunlight, whose swift pinnace of dewy air
No storm can overwhelm;
I sailed, where ever flows
Under the calm Serene
A spirit of deep emotion
From the unknown graves
Of the dead kings of Melody.*
Shadowy Aornos darkened o'er the helm
The horizontal æther; heaven stript bare
Its depths over Elysium, where the prow
Made the invisible water white as snow;
From that Typhæan mount, Inarime
There streamed a sunlike vapour, like the standard
Of some ethereal host;
Whilst from all the coast,
Louder and louder, gathering round, there wandered
Over the oracular woods and divine sea
Prophesyings which grew articulate—
They seize me—I must speak them—be they fate!

* Homer and Virgil.

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STROPHE α. 1.

Naples! thou Heart of men which ever pantest
Naked, beneath the lidless eye of heaven!
Elysian City, which to calm enchantest
The mutinous air and sea: they round thee, even
As sleep round Love, are driven!
Metropolis of a ruined Paradise
Long lost, late won, and yet but half regained!
Bright Altar of the bloodless sacrifice,
Which armed Victory offers up unstained
To Love, the flower-enchained!
Thou which wert once, and then didst cease to be,
Now art, and henceforth ever shalt be, free,
If Hope and Truth and Justice can avail,
Hail, hail, all hail!

STROPHE β. 2.

Thou youngest giant birth
Which from the groaning earth
Leap'st, clothed in armour of impenetrable scale!
Last, of the Intercessors!
Who 'gainst the Crowned Transgressors
Pleadest before God's love! Arrayed in Wisdom's mail,
Wave thy lightning lance in mirth,
Nor let thy high heart fail,
Though from their hundred gates the leagued Oppressors
With hurried legions move!
Hail, hail, all hail!

ANTISTROPHE α.

What! though Cimmerian Anarchs dare blaspheme
Freedom and thee, thy shield is as a mirror
To make their blind slaves see, and with fierce gleam
To turn his hungry sword upon the wearer,

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A new Acteon's error
Shall their's have been—devoured by their own hounds!
Be thou like the imperial Basilisk
Killing thy foe with unapparent wounds!
Gaze on oppression, till at that dread risk
Aghast she pass from the Earth's disk,
Fear not, but gaze—for freemen mightier grow,
And slaves more feeble, gazing on their foe;
If Hope and Truth and Justice may avail,
Thou shalt be great—All hail!

ANTISTROPHE β. 2.

From Freedom's form divine,
From Nature's inmost shrine,
Strip every impious gawd, rend Error veil by veil:
O'er Ruin desolate,
O'er Falsehood's fallen state,
Sit thou sublime, unawed; be the Destroyer pale!
And equal laws be thine,
And winged words let sail,
Freighted with truth even from the throne of God:
That wealth, surviving fate,
Be thine.—All hail!

ANTISTROPHE α. γ.

Didst thou not start to hear Spain's thrilling pæan
From land to land re-echoed solemnly,
Till silence became music? From the Æean*
To the cold Alps, eternal Italy
Starts to hear thine! The Sea
Which paves the desert streets of Venice laughs
In light and music; widowed Genoa wan

* Ææa, the island of Circe.

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By moonlight spells ancestral epitaphs,
Murmuring, where is Doria? fair Milan,
Within those veins long ran
The viper's* palsying venom, lifts her heel
To bruise his head. The signal and the seal
(If Hope and Truth and Justice can avail)
Art Thou of all these hopes.—O hail!

ANTISTROPHE β. γ.

Florence! beneath the sun,
Of cities fairest one,
Blushes within her bower for Freedom's expectation:
From eyes of quenchless hope
Rome tears the priestly cope,
As ruling once by power, so now by admiration,
An athlete stript to run
From a remoter station
For the high prize lost on Philippi's shore:—
As then Hope, Truth, and Justice, did avail,
So now may Fraud and Wrong! O hail!

EPODE I. β.

Hear ye the march as of the Earth-born Forms
Arrayed against the everliving Gods?
The crash and darkness of a thousand storms
Bursting their inaccessible abodes
Of crags and thunder-clouds?
See ye the banners blazoned to the day,
Inwrought with emblems of barbaric pride?
Dissonant threats kill Silence far away,
The serene Heaven which wraps our Eden wide

* The viper was the armorial device of the Visconti, tyrants of Milan.

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With iron light is dyed,
The Anarchs of the North lead forth their legions
Like Chaos o'er creation, uncreating;
An hundred tribes nourished on strange religions
And lawless slaveries,—down the aerial regions
Of the white Alps, desolating,
Famished wolves that bide no waiting,
Blotting the glowing footsteps of old glory,
Trampling our columned cities into dust,
Their dull and savage lust
On Beauty's corse to sickness satiating—
They come! The fields they tread look black and hoary
With fire—from their red feet the streams run gory!

EPODE II. β.

Great Spirit, deepest Love!
Which rulest and dost move
All things which live and are within the Italian shore;
Who spreadest heaven around it;
Whose woods, rocks, waves, surround it;
Who sittest in thy star, o'er Ocean's western floor,
Spirit of beauty! at whose soft command
The sunbeams and the showers distil its poison
From the Earth's bosom chill;
O bid those beams be each a blinding brand
Of lightning! bid those showers be dews of poison!
Bid the Earth's plenty kill!
Bid thy bright Heaven above,
Whilst light and darkness bound it,
Be their tomb who planned
To make it ours and thine!
Or, with thine harmonizing ardours fill
And raise thy sons, as o'er the prone horizon

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Thy lamp feeds every twilight wave with fire—
Be man's high hope and unextinct desire,
The instrument to work thy will divine!
Then clouds from sunbeams, antelopes from leopards,
And frowns and fears from Thee,
Would not more swiftly flee
Than Celtic wolves from the Ausonian shepherds.—
Whatever, Spirit, from thy starry shrine
Thou yieldest or withholdest, Oh let be
This city of thy worship ever free!

September, 1820.

MARIANNE'S DREAM.

A PALE dream came to a Lady fair,
And said, a boon, a boon, I pray!
I know the secrets of the air,
And things are lost in the glare of day,
Which I can make the sleeping see,
If they will put their trust in me.

And thou shalt know of things unknown,
If thou wilt let me rest between
The veiny lids, whose fringe is thrown
Over thine eyes so dark and sheen:
And half in hope, and half in fright,
The Lady closed her eyes so bright.

At first all deadly shapes were driven
Tumultuously across her sleep,

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And o'er the vast cope of bending heaven
All ghastly visaged clouds did sweep;
And the Lady ever looked to spy
If the gold sun shone forth on high.

And as towards the east she turned,
She saw aloft in the morning air,
Which now with hues of sunrise burned
A great black Anchor rising there;
And wherever the Lady turned her eyes
It hung before her in the skies.

The sky was blue as the summer sea,
The depths were cloudless over head,
The air was calm as it could be,
There was no sight nor sound of dread,
But that black Anchor floating still
Over the piny eastern hill.

The Lady grew sick with a weight of fear,
To see that Anchor ever hanging,
And veiled her eyes; she then did hear
The sound as of a dim low clanging,
And looked abroad if she might know
Was it aught else, or but the flow
Of the blood in her own veins, to and fro.

There was a mist in the sunless air,
Which shook as it were with an earthquake's shock,
But the very weeds that blossomed there
Were moveless, and each mighty rock
Stood on its basis stedfastly;
The Anchor was seen no more on high.

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But piled around, with summits hid
In lines of cloud at intervals,
Stood many a mountain pyramid
Among whose everlasting walls
Two mighty cities shone, and ever
Through the red mist their domes whose quiver.

On two dread mountains, from whose crest,
Might seem, the eagle for her brood
Would ne'er have hung her dizzy nest,
Those tower-encircled cities stood.
A vision strange such towers to see,
Sculptured and wrought so gorgeously,
Where human art could never be.

And columns framed of marble white,
And giant fanes, dome over dome
Piled, and triumphant gates, all bright
With workmanship, which could not come
From touch of mortal instrument,
Shot o'er the vales, or lustre lent
From its own shapes magnificent.

But still the Lady heard that clang
Filling the wide air far away;
And still the mist, whose light did hang
Among the mountains shook alway,
So that the Lady's heart beat fast,
As half in joy, and half aghast,
On those high domes her look she cast.

Sudden from out that city sprung
A light that made the earth grow red;
Two flames that each with quivering tongue
Licked its high domes, and over head

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Among those mighty towers and fanes
Dropped fire, as a volcano rains
Its sulphurous ruin on the plains.

And hark! a rush, as if the deep
Had burst its bonds; she looked behind,
And saw over the western steep
A raging flood descend, and wind
Through that wide vale: she felt no fear,
But said within herself, 'tis clear
These towers are Nature's own, and she
To save them has sent forth the sea.

And now those raging billows came
Where that fair Lady sate, and she
Was borne towards the showering flame
By the wild waves heaped tumultuously,
And, on a little plank, the flow
Of the whirlpool bore her to and fro.

The waves were fiercely vomited
From every tower and every dome,
And dreary light did widely shed
O'er that vast flood's suspended foam,
Beneath the smoke which hung its night
On the stained cope of heaven's light.

The plank whereon that Lady sate
Was driven through the chasms, about and about,
Between the peaks so desolate
Of the drowning mountain, in and out,
As the thistle-beard on a whirlwind sails—
While the flood was filling those hollow vales.

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At last her plank an eddy crost,
And bore her to the city's wall,
Which now the flood had reached almost;
It might the stoutest heart appal
To hear the fire roar and hiss
Through the domes of those mighty palaces.

The eddy whirled her round and round
Before a gorgeous gate, which stood
Piercing the clouds of smoke which bound
Its aery arch with light like blood;
She looked on that gate of marble clear
With wonder that extinguished fear.

For it was filled with sculptures rarest,
Of forms most beautiful and strange,
Like nothing human, but the fairest
Of winged shapes, whose legions range
Throughout the sleep of those who are,
Like this same Lady, good and fair.

And as she looked, still lovelier grew
Those marble forms;—the sculptor sure
Was a strong spirit, and the hue
Of his own mind did there endure
After the touch, whose power had braided
Such grace, was in some sad change faded.

She looked, the flames were dim, the flood
Grew tranquil as a woodland river
Winding through hills in solitude;
Those marble shapes then seemed to quiver,
And their fair limbs to float in motion,
Like weeds unfolding in the ocean.

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And their lips moved; one seemed to speak,
When suddenly the mountain crackt,
And through the chasm the flood did break
With an earth-uplifting cataract:
The statues gave a joyous scream,
And on its wings the pale thin dream
Lifted the Lady from the stream.

The dizzy flight of that phantom pale
Waked the fair Lady from her sleep,
And she arose, while from the veil
Of her dark eyes the dream did creep,
And she walked about as one who knew
That sleep has sights as clear and true
As any waking eyes can view.
Marlow, 1817.

MONT BLANC.

Lines written in the Vale of Chamouni.

The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of waters,—with a sound but half its own,
Such as a feeble brook will oft assume
In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,
Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,
Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river
Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

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Thus thou, Ravine of Arve—dark, deep Ravine—
Thou many-coloured, many-voiced vale,
Over whose pines and crags and caverns sail
Fast clouds, shadows, and sunbeams: awful scene,
Where Power in likeness of the Arve comes down
From the ice gulphs that gird his secret throne,
Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame
Of lightning thro' the tempest;—thou dost lie,
The giant brood of pines around thee clinging,
Children of elder time, in whose devotion
The chainless winds still come and ever came
To drink their odours, and their mighty swinging
To hear—an old and solemn harmony:
Thine earthly rainbows stretched across the sweep
Of the ethereal waterfall, whose veil
Robes some unsculptured image; the strange sleep
Which, when the voices of the desert fail,
Wraps all in its own deep eternity;—
Thy caverns echoing to the Arve's commotion
A loud, lone sound, no other sound can tame;
Thou art pervaded with that ceaseless motion,
Thou art the path of that unresting sound—
Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee
I seem as in a trance sublime and strange
To muse on my own separate phantasy,
My own, my human mind, which passively
Now renders and receives fast influencings,
Holding an unremitting interchange
With the clear universe of things around;
One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings
Now float above thy darkness, and now rest
Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,
In the still cave of the witch Poesy,
Seeking among the shadows that pass by

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Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,
Some phantom, some faint image; till the breast
From which they fled recals them, thou art there!

Some say that gleams of a remoter world
Visit the soul in sleep,—that death is slumber,
And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber
Of those who wake and live.— I look on high;
Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled
The veil of life and death? or do I lie
In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep
Speed far around and inaccessibly
Its circles? For the very spirit fails,
Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
That vanishes among the viewless gales!
Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,
Mount Blanc appears,—still, snowy, and serene—
Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between
Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread
And wind among the accumulated steeps;
A desert peopled by the storms alone,
Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,
And the wolf tracks her there— how hideously
Its shapes are heaped around! rude, bare, and high,
Ghastly, and scarred, and riven.—Is this the scene
Where the old Earthquake-dæmon taught her young
Ruin? Were these their toys? or did a sea
Of fire envelope once this silent snow?
None can reply—all seems eternal now.
The wilderness has a mysterious tongue
Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
So solemn, so serene, that man may be

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But for such faith which nature reconciled;
Thou hast a voice great Mountain, to repeal
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood,
By all, but which the wise, and great, and good,
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the streams,
Ocean, and all the living things that dwell
Within the dædal earth; lightning, and rain,
Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane,
The torpor of the year when feeble dreams
Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep
Holds every future leaf and flower;—the bound
With which from that detested trance they leap;
The works and ways of man, their death and birth,
And that of him and all that his may be;
All things that move and breathe with toil and sound
Are born and die, revolve, subside, and swell.
Power dwells apart in its tranquillity
Remote, serene, and inaccessible:
And *this*, the naked countenance of earth,
On which I gaze, even these primæval mountains,
Teach the adverting mind. The glaciers creep
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,
Slowly rolling on; there, many a precipice
Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power
Have piled—dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
A city of death, distinct with many a tower
And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
Rolls its perpetual stream; vast pines are strewing
Its destined path, or in the mangled soil
Branchless and shattered stand; the rocks, drawn down

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From yon remotest waste, have overthrown
The limits of the dead and living world,
Never to be reclaimed. The dwelling-place
Of insects, beasts, and birds, becomes its spoil;
Their food and their retreat for ever gone,
So much of life and joy is lost. The race
Of man flies far in dread; his work and dwelling
Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,
And their place is not known. Below, vast caves
Shine in the rushing torrent's restless gleam,
Which from those secret chasms in tumult dwelling
Meet in the vale, and one majestic River,
The breath and blood of distant lands, for ever
Rolls it sloud waters to the ocean waves,
Breathes its swift vapours to the circling air.

Mont Blanc yet gleams on high:—the power is there,
The still and solemn power of many sights
And many sounds, and much of life and death.
In the calm darkness of the moonless nights,
In the lone glare of day, the snows descend
Upon that Mountain; none beholds them there,
Nor when the flakes burn in the sinking sun,
Or the star-beams dart through them:—Winds contend
Silently there, and heap the snow with breath
Rapid and strong, but silently! Its home
The voiceless lightning in these solitudes
Keeps innocently, and like vapour broods
Over the snow. The secret strength of things
Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome
Of heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?

Switzerland, June 23, 1816.

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MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

ON THE MEDUSA OF LEONARDO DA VINCI,

IN THE FLORENTINE GALLERY.

It lieth, gazing on the midnight sky,
  Upon the cloudy mountain peak supine;
Below, far lands are seen tremblingly;
  Its horror and its beauty are divine.
Upon its lips and eyelids seems to lie
  Loveliness like a shadow, from which shine,
Fiery and lurid, struggling underneath,
The agonies of anguish and of death.

Yet it is less the horror than the grace
  Which turns the gazer's spirit into stone;
Whereon the lineaments of that dead face
  Are graven, till the characters be grown
Into itself, and thought no more can trace;
  'Tis the melodious hue of beauty thrown
Athwart the darkness and the glare of pain,
Which humanize and harmonize the strain.

And from its head as from one body grow,
  As [ ] grass out of a watery rock,
Hairs which are vipers, and they curl and flow
  And their long tangles in each other lock,
And with unending involutions show
  Their mailed radiance, as it were to mock

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The torture and the death within, and saw
The solid air with many a ragged jaw.

And from a stone beside a poisonous eft
Peeps idly into those Gorgonian eyes;
Whilst in the air a ghastly bat, bereft
Of sense, has flitted with a mad surprise
Out of the cave this hideous light had cleft,
And he comes hastening like a moth that hies
After a taper; and the midnight sky
Flares, a light more dread than obscurity.

'Tis the tempestuous loveliness of terror;
For from the serpents gleams a brazen glare
Kindled by that inextricable error
Which makes a thrilling vapour of the air
Become a [ ] and ever-shifting mirror
Of all the beauty and the terror there—
A woman's countenance, with serpent locks,
Gazing in death on heaven from those wet rocks.

Florence, 1819.

SONG.

Rarely, rarely, comes thou,
Spirit of Delight!
Wherefore hast thou left me now
Many a day and night?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou art fled away.

How shall ever one like me
Win thee back again?

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With the joyous and the free
  Thou wilt scoff at pain.
Spirit false! thou hast forgot
All but those who need thee not.

As a lizard with the shade
  Of a trembling leaf,
Thou with sorrow art dismayed;
  Even the sighs of grief
Reproach thee, that thou art not near,
And reproach thou wilt not hear.

Let me set my mournful ditty
  To a merry measure,
Thou wilt never come for pity,
  Thou wilt come for pleasure.
Pity then will cut away
Those cruel wings, and thou wilt stay.

I love all that thou lovest,
  Spirit of Delight!
The fresh Earth in new leaves drest,
  And the starry night;
Autumn evening, and the morn
When the golden mists are born.

I love snow, and all the forms
  Of the radiant frost:
I love waves, and winds, and storms,
  Every thing almost
Which is Nature's, and may be
Untainted by man's misery.

I love tranquil solitude,
  And such society

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As is quiet, wise, and good;
Between thee and me
What difference! but thou dost possess
The things I seek, not love them less.

I love Love—though he has wings,
And like light can flee,
But, above all other things,
Spirit, I love thee—
Thou art love and life! O come,
Make once more my heart thy home.

TO CONSTANTIA,

SINGING.

Thus to be lost and thus to sink and die,
Perchance were death indeed!—Constantia, turn!
In thy dark eyes a power like light doth lie,
Even though the sounds which were thy voice, which burn
Between thy lips, are laid to sleep;
Within thy breath, and on thy hair, like odour it is yet,
And from thy touch like fire doth leap.
Even while I write, my burning cheeks are wet,
Alas, that the torn heart can bleed, but not forget!

A breathless awe, like the swift change
Unseen, but felt in youthful slumbers,
Wild, sweet, but uncommunicably strange,
Thou breathest now in fast ascending numbers.
The cope of heaven seems rent and cloven
By the inchantment of thy strain,

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And on my shoulders wings are woven,
To follow its sublime career,
Beyond the mighty moons that wane
Upon the verge of nature's utmost sphere,
'Till the world's shadowy walls are past and disappear.

Her voice is hovering o'er my soul—it lingers
O'ershadowing it with soft and lulling wings,
The blood and life within those snowy fingers
Teach witchcraft to the instrumental strings.
My brain is wild, my breath comes quick—
The blood is listening in my frame,
And thronging shadows, fast and thick,
Fall on my overflowing eyes;
My heart is quivering like a flame;
As morning dew, that in the sunbeam dies,
I am dissolved in these consuming extacies.

I have no life, Constantia, now, but thee,
Whilst, like the world-surrounding air, thy song
Flows on, and fills all things with melody.—
Now is thy voice a tempest swift and strong,
On which, like one in trance upborne,
Secure o'er rocks and waves I weep,
Rejoicing like a cloud of morn.
Now 'tis the breath of summer night,
Which, when the starry waters sleep,
Round western isles, with incense-blossoms bright,
Lingering, suspends my soul in its voluptuous flight.

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THE FUGITIVES.

The waters are flashing,
The white hail is dashing,
The lightnings are glancing,
The hoar-spray is dancing—
Away!

The whirlwind is rolling,
The thunder is tolling,
The forest is swinging,
The minster bells ringing—
Come away!

The Earth is like Ocean,
Wreck-strewn and in motion:
Bird, beast, man, and worm,
Have crept out of the storm—
Come away!

"Our boat has one sail,
And the helmsman is pale;—
A bold pilot I trow,
Who should follow us now,"—
Shouted He—

And she cried: "Ply the oar!
Put off gaily from shore!"—
As she spoke, bolts of death
Mixed with hail specked their path
O'er the sea.

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And from isle, tower, and rock,
The blue beacon cloud broke,
Though dumb in the blast,
The red cannon flashed fast
From the lee.

"And fear'st thou, and fear'st thou?
And see'st thou, and hear'st thou?
And drive we not free
O'er the terrible sea,
I and thou?"

One boat-cloak did cover
The loved and the lover—
Their blood beats one measure,
They murmur proud pleasure
Soft and low;—

While around the lashed Ocean,
Like mountains in motion,
Is withdrawn and uplifted,
Sunk, shattered, and shifted,
To and fro.

In the court of the fortress
Beside the pale portress,
Like a blood-hound well beaten,
The bridegroom stands, eaten
By shame;

On the topmost watch-turret,
As a dead-boding spirit,
Stands the grey tyrant father,
To his voice the mad weather
Seems tame;

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And with curses wild
As ere clung to child,
He devotes to the blast
The best, loveliest, and last,
Of his name!

A LAMENT.

Swifter far than summer's flight,
Swifter far than youth's delight,
Swifter far than happy night,
Art thou come and gone:
As the earth when leaves are dead,
As the night when sleep is sped,
As the heart when joy is fled,
I am left lone, alone.

The swallow Summer comes again,
The owlet Night resumes her reign,
But the wild swan Youth is fain
To fly with thee, false as thou.
My heart each day desires the morrow,
Sleep itself is turned to sorrow,
Vainly would my winter borrow
Sunny leaves from any bough.

Lilies for a bridal bed,
Roses for a matron's head,
Violets for a maiden dead,
Pansies let my flowers be:
On the living grave I bear,
Scatter them without a tear,
Let no friend, however dear,
Waste one hope, one fear for me.

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THE PINE FOREST

OF THE CASCINE, NEAR PISA.

Dearest, best, and brightest,
Come away,
To the woods and to the fields!
Dearer than this fairest day,
Which like thee to those in sorrow,
Comes to bid a sweet good-morrow
To the rough year just awake
In its cradle in the brake.

The eldest of the hours of spring,
Into the winter wandering,
Looks upon the leafless wood;
And the banks all bare and rude
Found it seems this halcyon morn,
In February's bosom born,
Bending from heaven, in azure mirth,
Kissed the cold forehead of the earth,
And smiled upon the silent sea,
And bade the frozen streams be free;
And waked to music all the fountains,
And breathed upon the rigid mountains,
And made the wintry world appear
Like one on whom thou smilest, dear.

Radiant Sister of the Day,
Awake! arise! and come away!
To the wild woods and the plains,
To the pools where winter rains
Image all the roof of leaves,
Where the Pine its garland weaves,

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Sapless, grey, and ivy dun,
Round stones that never kiss the sun,
To the sandhills of the sea,
Where the earliest violets be.

Now the last day of many days,
All beautiful and bright as thou,
The loveliest and the last, is dead,
Rise Memory, and write its praise,
And do thy wonted work and trace
The epitaph of glory fled:
For the Earth has changed its face,
A frown is on the Heaven's brow.

We wandered to the Pine Forest
That skirts the Ocean's foam,
The lightest wind was in its nest,
The tempest in its home.

The whispering waves were half asleep,
The clouds were gone to play,
And on the woods, and on the deep,
The smile of Heaven lay.

It seemed as if the day were one
Sent from beyond the skies,
Which shed to earth above the sun
A light of Paradise.

We paused amid the Pines that stood
The giants of the waste,
Tortured by storms to shapes as rude,
With stems like serpents interlaced.

How calm it was—the silence there

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By such a chain was bound,
That even the busy woodpecker
Made stiller by her sound

The inviolable quietness;
The breath of peace we drew,
With its soft motion made not less
The calm that round us grew.

It seemed that from the remotest seat
Of the white mountain's waste,
To the bright flower beneath our feet,
A magic circle traced;—

A spirit interfused around,
A thinking silent life,
To momentary peace it bound
Our mortal Nature's strife.—

For still it seemed the centre of
The magic circle there,
Was one whose being filled with love
The breathless atmosphere.

Were not the crocusses that grew
Under that ilex tree,
As beautiful in scent and hue
As ever fed the bee?

We stood beside the pools that lie
Under the forest bough,
And each seemed like a sky
Gulphed in a world below;—

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A purple firmament of light,
Which in the dark earth lay,
More boundless than the depth of night,
And clearer than the day—

In which the massy forests grew,
As in the upper air,
More perfect both in shape and hue
Than any waving there.

Like one beloved, the scene had lent
To the dark water's breast
Its every leaf and lineament
With that clear truth expressed.

There lay far glades and neighbouring lawn,
And through the dark green crowd
The white sun twinkling like the dawn
Under a speckled cloud.

Sweet views, which in our world above
Can never well be seen,
Were imaged by the water's love
Of that fair forest green.

And all was interfused beneath
Within an Elysium air,
An atmosphere without a breath,
A silence sleeping there.

Until a wandering wind crept by,
Like an unwelcome thought,
Which from my mind's too faithful eye
Blots thy bright image out.

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For thou art good and dear and kind,
The forest ever green,
But less of peace in S——'s mind,
Than calm in waters seen.

February 2, 1822.

TO NIGHT.

Swiftly walk over the western wave,
Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where, all the long and lone daylight,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear,—
Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle grey,
Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of day,
Kiss her until she be wearied out,
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long sought!

When I arose and saw the dawn,
I sighed for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
I sighed for thee.

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Thy brother Death came, and cried,
Wouldst thou me?
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noon-tide bee,
Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?—And I replied,
No, not thee!

Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon—
Sleep will come when thou art fled;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon!

EVENING.

PONT A MARE, PISA.

The sun is set; the swallows are asleep;
The boats are flitting fast in the grey air;
The slow soft toads out of damp corners creep,
And evening's breath, wandering here and there
Over the quivering surface of the stream,
Wakes not one ripple from its silent dream.

There is no dew on the dry grass to-night,
Nor damp within the shadow of the trees;
The wind is intermitting, dry, and light;
And in the inconstant motion of the breeze
The dust and straws are driven up and down,
And whirled about the pavement of the town.

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Within the surface of the fleeting river
The wrinkled image of the city lay,
Immoveably unquiet, and for ever
It trembles, but it never fades away;
Go to the [ ]
You, being changed, will find it then as now.

The chasm in which the sun has sunk is shut
By darkest barriers of enormous cloud,
Like mountain over mountain huddled—but
Growing and moving upwards in a crowd,
And over it a space of watery blue,
Which the keen evening star is shining through.

ARETHUSA.

Arethusa arose
From her couch of snows
In the Acroceraunian mountains,—
From cloud and from crag,
With many a jag,
Shepherding her bright fountains.
She leapt down the rocks
With her rainbow locks
Streaming among the streams;—
Her steps paved with green
The downward ravine
Which slopes to the western gleams:
And gliding and springing,
She went, ever singing,
In murmurs as soft as sleep;
The Earth seemed to love her,
And Heaven smiled above her,
As she lingered towards the deep.

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Then Alpheus bold,
On his glacier cold,
With his trident the mountains strook;
And opened a chasm
In the rocks;—with the spasm
All Erymanthus shook.
And the black south wind
It concealed behind
The urns of the silent snow,
And earthquake and thunder
Did rend in sunder
The bars of the springs below:
The beard and the hair
Of the river God were
Seen through the torrent's sweep,
As he followed the light
Of the fleet nymph's flight
To the brink of the Dorian deep.

"Oh, save me! Oh, guide me!
And bid the deep hide me,
For he grasps me now by the hair!"
The loud Ocean heard,
To its blue depth stirred,
And divided at her prayer;
And under the water
The Earth's white daughter
Fled like a sunny beam;
Behind her descended,
Her billows unblended
With the brackish Dorian stream:—
Like a gloomy stain
On the emerald main
Alpheus rushed behind,—
As an eagle pursuing

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A dove to its ruin
Down the streams of the cloudy wind.

Under the bowers
Where the Ocean Powers
Sit on their pearled thrones,
Through the coral woods
Of the weltering floods,
Over heaps of unvalued stones:
Through the dim beams
Which amid the streams
Weave a net-work of coloured light;
And under the caves,
Where the shadowy waves
Are as green as the forest's night:—
Outspeeding the shark,
And the sword-fish dark,
Under the ocean foam,
And up through the rifts
Of the mountain clifts
They passed to their Dorian home.

And now from their fountains
In Enna's mountains,
Down one vale where the morning basks,
Like friends once parted
Grown single-hearted,
They ply their watery tasks.
At sun-rise they leap
From their cradles steep
In the cave of the shelving hill;
At noon-tide they flow
Through the woods below
And the meadows of Asphodel;

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And at night they sleep
In the rocking deep
Beneath the Ortygian shore;—
Like spirits that lie
In the azure sky
When they love but live no more.

Pisa, 1820.

THE QUESTION.

I DREAMED that, as I wandered by the way,
Bare winter suddenly was changed to spring,
And gentle odours led my steps astray,
Mixed with a sound of waters murmuring
Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay
Under a copse, and hardly dared to fling
Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,
But kissed it and then fled, as thou mightest in dream.

There grew pied wind-flowers and violets,
Daisies, those pearled Arcturi of the earth,
The constellated flower that never sets;
Faint oxlips; tender bluebells, at whose birth
The sod scarce heaved; and that tall flower that wets
Its mother's face with heaven-collected tears,
When the low wind, its playmate's voice, it hears.

And in the warm hedge grew lush eglantine,
Green cow-bind and the moonlight-coloured May,
And cherry blossoms, and white cups, whose wine
Was the bright dew yet drained not by the day;
And wild roses, and ivy serpentine,

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With its dark buds and leaves, wandering astray ;
And flowers azure, black and streaked with gold,
Fairer than any wakened eyes behold.

And nearer to the river's trembling edge
There grew broad flag flowers, purple prankt with white,
And starry river buds among the sedge,
And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,
Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge
With moonlight beams of their own watery light ;
And bulrushes, and reeds of such deep green
As soothed the dazzled eye with sober sheen.

Methought that of these visionary flowers
I made a nosegay, bound in such a way
That the same hues, which in their natural bowers
Were mingled or opposed, the like array
Kept these imprisoned children of the Hours
Within my hand,—and then, elate and gay,
I hasstened to the spot whence I had come,
That I might there present it!—Oh! to whom?

LINES TO AN INDIAN AIR.

I ARISE from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright:
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Has led me—who knows how?
To thy chamber window, sweet!

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The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream—
The champak odours fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart,
As I must on thine,
Beloved as thou art!

Oh lift me from the grass!
I die, I faint, I fail!
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas!
My heart beats loud and fast,
Oh! press it close to thine again,
Where it will break at last.

STANZAS

WRITTEN IN DEJECTION, NEAR NAPLES.

The sun is warm, the sky is clear,
The waves are dancing fast and bright,
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
The purple noon's transparent light,
The breath of the moist air is light,
Around its unexpanded buds;
Like many a voice of one delight,
The winds, the birds, the ocean floods,
The City's voice itself is soft, like Solitude's.

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I see the Deep's untrampled floor
With green and purple seaweeds strown;
I see the waves upon the shore,
Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown:
I sit upon the sands alone,
The lightning of the noon-tide ocean
Is flashing round me, and a tone
Arises from its measured motion,
How sweet! did any heart now share in my emotion.

Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content surpassing wealth
The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned—
Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure.
Others I see whom these surround—
Smiling they live and call life pleasure;—
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne and yet must bear,
Till death like sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

Some might lament that I were cold,
As I, when this sweet day is gone,
Which my lost heart, too soon grown old,
Insults with this untimely moan;

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They might lament—for I am one
Whom men love not,—and yet regret,
Unlike this day, which, when the sun
Shall on its stainless glory set,
Will linger, though enjoyed, like joy in memory yet.
December, 1818.

AUTUMN:

A DIRGE.

The warm sun is failing, the bleak wind is wailing,
The bare boughs are sighing, the pale flowers are dying,
And the year
On the earth her death-bed, in a shroud of leaves dead,
Is lying.
Come, months, come away,
From November to May,
In your saddest array;
Follow the bier
Of the dead cold year,
And like dim shadows watch by her sepulchre.

The chill rain is falling, the nipt worm is crawling,
The rivers are swelling, the thunder is knelling
For the year;
The blithe swallows are flown, and the lizards each gone
To his dwelling;
Come, months, come away;
Put on white, black, and grey,
Let your light sisters play—
Ye, follow the bier
Of the dead cold year,
And make her grave green with tear on tear.

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HYMN OF APOLLO.

The sleepless Hours who watch me as I lie,
Curtained with star-enwoven tapestries,
From the broad moonlight of the sky,
Fanning the busy dreams from my dim eyes,—
Waken me when their Mother, the grey Dawn,
Tells them that dreams and that the moon is gone.

Then I arise, and climbing Heaven's blue dome,
I walk over the mountains and the waves,
Leaving my robe upon the ocean foam;
My footsteps pave the clouds with fire; the caves
Are filled with my bright presence, and the air
Leaves the green earth to my embraces bare.

The sunbeams are my shafts, with which I kill
Deceit, that loves the night and fears the day;
All men who do or even imagine ill
Fly me, and from the glory of my ray
Good minds and open actions take new might,
Until diminished by the reign of night.

I feed the clouds, the rainbows, and the flowers,
With their ethereal colours; the Moon's globe
And the pure stars in their eternal bowers
Are cinctured with my power as with a robe;
Whatever lamps on Earth or Heaven may shine,
Are portions of one power, which is mine.

I stand at noon upon the peak of Heaven,
Then with unwilling steps I wander down
Into the clouds of the Atlantic even;
For grief that I depart they weep and frown:

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What look is more delightful than the smile
With which I soothe them from the western isle?

I am the eye with which the Universe
Beholds itself and knows itself divine;
All harmony of instrument or verse,
All prophesy, all medicine, are mine,
All light of art or nature;—to my song,
Victory and praise in their own right belong.

HYMN OF PAN.

From the forests and highlands
We come, we come;
From the river-girt islands,
Where loud waves are dumb
Listening to my sweet pipings.
The wind in the reeds and the rushes,
The bees on the bells of thyme,
The birds on the myrtle bushes,
The cicale above in the lime,
And the lizard below in the grass,
Were as silent as ever old Tmolus* was,
Listening to my sweet pipings.

Liquid Peneus was flowing,
And all dark Tempe lay
In Pelion's shadow, outgrowing

* This and the former poem were written at the request of a friend, to be inserted in a drama on the subject of Midas. Apollo and Pan contended before Tmolus for the prize in music.

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The light of the dying day,
Speeded by my sweet pipings.
The Sileni, and Sylvans, and Fauns,
And the Nymphs of the woods and waves,
To the edge of the moist river-lawns,
And the brink of the dewy caves,
And all that did then attend and follow
Were silent with love, as you now, Apollo,
With envy of my sweet pipings.

I sang of the dancing stars,
I sang of the dædal Earth,
And of Heaven—and the giant wars,
And Love, and Death, and Birth,—
And then I changed my pipings,—
Singing how down the vale of Menalus
I pursued a maiden and clasped a reed:
Gods and men, we are all deluded thus!
It breaks in our bosom, and then we bleed:
All wept, as I think both ye now would,
If envy or age had not frozen your blood,
At the sorrow of my sweet pipings.

THE BOAT

ON THE SERCHIO.

Our boat is asleep in Serchio's stream,
Its sails are folded like thoughts in a dream,
The helm sways idly, hither and thither;
Dominic, the boat-man, has brought the mast,
And the oars, and the sails; but 'tis sleeping fast,
Like a beast, unconscious of its tether.

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The stars burnt out in the pale blue air,
And the thin white moon lay withering there,
To tower, and cavern, and rift, and tree,
The owl and the bat fled drowsily.
Day had kindled the dewy woods
And the rocks above and the stream below,
And the vapours in their multitudes,
And the Apennine's shroud of summer snow,
And cloathed with light of aery gold
The mists in their eastern caves uprolled.

Day had awakened all things that be,
The lark and the thrush and the swallow free;
And the milkmaid's song and the mower's scythe,
And the matin-bell and the mountain bee:
Fire-flies were quenched on the dewy corn;
Glow-worms went out on the river's brim,
Like lamps which a student forgets to trim:

The beetle forgot to wind his horn,
The crickets were still in the meadow and hill:
Like a flock of rooks at a farmer's gun,
Night's dreams and terrors, every one,
Fled from the brains which are their prey,
From the lamp's death to the morning ray:

All rose to do the task He set to each,
Who shaped us to his ends and not our own;
The million rose to learn, and one to teach
What none yet ever knew or can be known;

And many rose
Whose woe was such that fear became desire;—
Melchior and Lionel were not among those;

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They from the throng of men had stepped aside,
And made their home under the green hill side.
It was that hill, whose intervening brow
Screens Lucca from the Pisan's envious eye,
Which the circumfluous plain waving below,
Like a wide lake of green fertility,
With streams and fields and marshes bare,
Divides from the far Apennines—which lie
Islanded in the immeasurable air.

"What think you, as she lies in her green cove,
Our little sleeping boat is dreaming of?
If morning dreams are true, why I should guess
That she was dreaming of our idleness,
And of the miles of watery way
We should have led her by this time of day."—

——"Never mind," said Lionel,
"Give care to the winds, they can bear it well
About you poplar tops; and see
The white clouds are driving merrily,
And the stars we miss this morn will light
More willingly our return to-night.—
List, my dear fellow, the breeze blows fair;
How it scatters Dominic's long black hair,
Singing of us, and our lazy motions,
If I can guess a boat's emotions.—"

The chain is loosed, the sails are spread,
The living breath is fresh behind,
As, with dews and sunrise fed,
Comes the laughing morning wind;—
The sails are full, the boat makes head
Against the Serchio's torrent fierce,
Then flags with intermitting course,

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And hangs upon the wave [ ].
Which fervid from its mountain source
Shallow, smooth, and strong, doth come,—
Swift as fire, tempestuously
It sweeps into the affrighted sea;
In morning's smile its eddies coil,
Its billows sparkle, toss, and boil,
Torturing all its quiet light
Into columns fierce and bright.

The Serchio, twisting forth
Between the marble barriers which it clove
At Ripafratta, leads through the dread chasm
The wave that died the death which lovers love,
Living in what it sought; as if this spasm
Had not yet past, the toppling mountains cling,
But the clear stream in full enthusiasm
Pours itself on the plain, until wandering,
Down one clear path of effluence chrystalline
Sends its clear waves, that they may fling
At Arno's feet tribute of corn and wine:
Then, through the pestilential deserts wild
Of tangled marsh and woods of stunted fir,
It rushes to the Ocean.

July, 1821.

THE ZUCCA.*

Summer was dead and Autumn was expiring,
And infant Winter laughed upon the land
All cloudlessly and cold;—when I, desiring

* Pumpkin.

Digitized by Google

More in this world than any understand,
Wept o'er the beauty, which, like sea retiring,
Had left the earth bare as the wave-worn sand
Of my poor heart, and o'er the grass and flowers
Pale for the falsehood of the flattering hours.

Summer was dead, but I yet lived to weep,
The instability of all but weeping;
And on the earth lulled in her winter sleep
I woke, and envied her as she was sleeping.
Too happy Earth! over thy face shall creep
The wakening vernal airs, until thou, leaping
From unremembered dreams shalt [ ] see
No death divide thy immortality.

I loved—O no, I mean not one of ye,
Or any earthly one, though ye are dear
As human heart to human heart may be;—
I loved, I know not what—but this low sphere,
And all that it contains, contains not thee,
Thou, whom seen no where, I feel every where,
Dim object of my soul's idolatry.
Veiled art thou like—

By Heaven and Earth, from all whose shapes thou flowest,
Neither to be contained, delayed, or hidden,
Making divine the loftiest and the lowest,
When for a moment thou art not forbidden
To live within the life which thou bestowest;
And leaving noblest things vacant and chidden,
Cold as a corpse after the spirit's flight,
Blank as the sun after the birth of night.

In winds, and trees, and streams, and all things common,

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In music and the sweet unconscious tone
Of animals, and voices which are human,
Meant to express some feelings of their own;
In the soft motions and rare smile of woman,
In flowers and leaves, and in the fresh grass shewn,
Or dying in the autumn, I the most
Adore thee present or lament thee lost.

And thus I went, lamenting when I saw
A plant upon the river's margin lie,
Like one who loved beyond his Nature's law,
And in despair had cast him down to die;
Its leaves which had outlived the frost, the thaw
Had blighted as a heart which hatred's eye
Can blast not, but which pity kills; the dew
Lay on its spotted leaves like tears too true.

The Heavens had wept upon it, but the Earth
Had crushed it on her unmaternal breast
* * * * * * *

I bore it to my chamber, and I planted
It in a vase full of the lightest mould;
The winter beams which out of Heaven slanted
Fell through the window panes, disrobed of cold,
Upon its leaves and flowers; the star which panted
In evening for the Day, whose car has rolled
Over the horizon's wave, with looks of light
Smiled on it from the threshold of the night.

The mitigated influences of air
And light revived the plant, and from it grew
Strong leaves and tendrils, and its flowers fair,
Full as a cup with the vine's burning dew,

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O'erflowed with golden colours; an atmosphere
Of vital warmth infolded it anew,
And every impulse sent to every part
The unbeheld pulsations of its heart.

Well might the plant grow beautiful and strong,
Even if the sun and air had smiled not on it;
For one wept o'er it all the winter long
Tears pure as Heaven's rain, which fell upon it
Hour after hour; for sounds of softest song
Mixed with the stringed melodies that won it
To leave the gentle lips on which it slept,
Had loosed the heart of him who sat and wept.

Had loosed his heart, and shook the leaves and flowers
On which he wept, the while the savage storm
Waked by the darkest of December's hours
Was raving round the chamber hushed and warm;
The birds were shivering in their leafless bowers,
The fish were frozen in the pools, the form
Of every summer plant was dead [ ]
Whilst this * * *

January, 1822.

THE TWO SPIRITS.

AN ALLEGORY.

1*st. Spi.* O Thou, who plumed with strong desire
Wouldst float above the earth, beware!
A shadow tracks thy flight of fire—
Night is coming!
Bright are the regions of the air,

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And among the winds and beams
It were delight to wander there—
Night is coming!

2nd. Spi. The deathless stars are bright above;
If I would cross the shade of night,
Within my heart is the lamp of love,
And that is day!
And the moon will smile with gentle light
On my golden plumes where'er they move;
The meteors will linger round my flight,
And make night day.

1st. Spi. But if the whirlwinds of darkness wake
Hail, and lightning, and stormy rain;
See the bounds of the air are shaken—
Night is coming!
The red swift clouds of the hurricane
Yon declining sun have overtaken,
The clash of the hail sweeps over the plain—
Night is coming!

2nd. Spi. I see the light, and I hear the sound;
I'll sail on the flood of the tempest dark
With the calm within and the light around
Which makes night day:
And thou, when the gloom is deep and stark,
Look from thy dull earth, slumber-bound,
My moon-like flight thou then may'st mark
On high, far away.

Some say, there is a precipice
Where one vast pine is frozen to ruin
O'er piles of snow and chasms of ice
Mid Alpine mountains;

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And that the languid storm pursuing
That winged shape for ever flies
Round those hoar branches, aye renewing
Its aery fountains.

Some say, when nights are dry and clear,
And the death dews sleep on the morass,
Sweet whispers are heard by the traveller
Which makes night day:
And a silver shape like his early love doth pass
Upborne by her wild and glittering hair,
And when he awakes on the fragrant grass,
He finds night day.

A FRAGMENT.

They were two cousins, almost like to twins,
Except that from the catalogue of sins
Nature had razed their love—which could not be
But by dissevering their nativity.
And so they grew together, like two flowers
Upon one stem, which the same beams and showers
Lull or awaken in their purple prime,
Which the same hand will gather—the same clime
Shake with decay. This fair day smiles to see
All those who love,—and who ever loved like thee,
Fiordispina? Scarcely Cosimo,
Within whose bosom and whose brain now glow
The ardours of a vision which obscure
The very idol of its portraiture;
He faints, dissolved into a sense of love;
But thou art as a planet sphered above,

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But thou art Love itself—ruling the motion
Of his subjected spirit—such emotion
Must end in sin or sorror, if sweet May
Had not brought forth this morn—your wedding day.

A BRIDAL SONG.

The golden gates of sleep unbar
Where strength and beauty met together,
Kindle their image like a star
In a sea of glassy weather.
Night, with all thy stars look down,—
Darkness, weep thy holiest dew,—
Never smiled the inconstant moon
On a pair so true.
Let eyes not see their own delight;—
Haste, swift Hour, and thy flight
Oft renew.

Fairies, sprites, and angels, keep her!
Holy stars, permit no wrong!
And return to wake the sleeper,
Dawn,—ere it be long.
O joy! O fear! what will be done
In the absence of the sun!
Come along!

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THE SUNSET.

THERE late was One within whose subtle being,
As light and wind within some delicate cloud
That wakes amid the blue noon's burning sky,
Genius and youth contended. None may know
The sweetness of the joy which made his breath
Fail, like the trances of the summer air,
When, with the Lady of his love, who then
First knew the unreserve of mingled being,
He walked along the pathway of a field
Which to the east a hoar wood shadowed o'er,
But to the west was open to the sky.
There now the sun had sunk, but lines of gold
Hung on the ashen clouds, and on the points
Of the far level grass and nodding flowers
And the old dandelion's hoary beard,
And, mingled with the shades of twilight, lay
On the brown massy woods—and in the east
The broad and burning moon lingeringly rose
Between the black trunks of the crowded trees,
While the faint stars were gathering overhead.—
"Is it not strange, Isabel," said the youth,
"I never saw the sun? We will walk here
To-morrow; thou shalt look on it with me."

That night the youth and lady mingled lay
In love and sleep—but when the morning came
The lady found her lover dead and cold.
Let none believe that God in mercy gave
That stroke. The lady died not, nor grew wild,
But year by year lived on—in truth I think
Her gentleness and patience and sad smiles,
And that she did not die, but lived to tend

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Her aged father, were a kind of madness,
If madness 'tis to be unlike the world.
For but to see her were to read the tale
Woven by some subtlest bard, to make hard hearts
Dissolve away in wisdom-working grief;—
Her eyelashes were torn away with tears,
Her lips and cheeks were like things dead—so pale;
Her hands were thin, and through their wandering veins
And weak articulations might be seen
Day's ruddy light. The tomb of thy dead self
Which one vexed ghost inhabits, night and day,
Is all, lost child, that now remains of thee!

"Inheritor of more than earth can give,
Passionless calm and silence unreproved,
Whether the dead find, oh, not sleep! but rest,
And are the uncomplaining things they seem,
Or live, or drop in the deep sea of Love;
Oh, that like thine, mine epitaph were—Peace!"
This was the only moan she ever made.

1816.

SONG,

ON A FADED VIOLET.

The odour from the flower is gone,
Which like thy kisses breathed on me;
The colour from the flower is flown,
Which glowed of thee, and only thee!

A shrivelled, lifeless, vacant form,
It lies on my abandoned breast,
And mocks the heart which yet is warm
With cold and silent rest.

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I weep—my tears revive it not!
I sigh—it breathes no more on me;
Its mute and uncomplaining lot
Is such as mine should be.

LINES TO A CRITIC.

Honey from silk-worms who can gather,
Or silk from the yellow bee?
The grass may grow in winter weather
As soon as hate in me.

Hate men who cant, and men who pray
And men who rail like thee;
An equal passion to repay
They are not coy like me.

Or seek some slave of power and gold
To be thy dear heart's mate;
Thy love will move that bigot cold,
Sooner than me thy hate.

A passion like the one I prove
Cannot divided be;
I hate thy want of truth and love—
How should I then hate thee?

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GOOD NIGHT.

Good night? ah! no; the hour is ill
  Which severs those it should unite;
Let us remain together still,
  Then it will be *good* night.

How can I call the lone night good,
  Though thy sweet wishes wing its flight?
Be it not said, thought, understood,
  Then it will be *good* night.

To hearts which near each other move
  From evening close to morning light,
The night is good; because, my love,
  They never *say* good night.

TO-MORROW.

Where art thou, beloved, To-morrow?
  Whom young and old, and strong and weak,
Rich and poor, through joy and sorrow,
  Thy sweet smiles we ever seek,—
In thy place—ah! well-a-day!
We find the thing we fled—To-day.

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DEATH.

They die—the dead return not—Misery
Sits near an open grave and calls them over,
A Youth with hoary hair and haggard eye—
They are the names of kindred, friend, and lover,
Which he so feebly called—they all are gone!
Fond wretch, all dead, those vacant names alone,
This most familar scene, my pain—
These tombs alone remain.

Misery, my sweetest friend—oh! weep no more!
Thou wilt not be consoled—I wonder not!
For I have seen thee from thy dwelling's door
Watch the calm sunset with them, and this spot
Was even as bright and calm, but transitory,
And now thy hopes are gone, thy hair is hoary;
This most familiar scene, my pain—
These tombs alone remain.

A LAMENT.

O World! O life! O time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—Oh, never more!

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—Oh, never more!

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LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY.

THE fountains mingle with the river,
And the rivers with the ocean,
The winds of heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine
In one another's being mingle—
Why not I with thine?

See the mountains kiss high heaven,
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother:
And the sunlight clasps the earth,
And the moonbeams kiss the sea;—
What are all these kissings worth,
If thou kiss not me?

January, 1820.

TO E*** V***

MADONNA, wherefore hast thou sent to me
Sweet basil and mignionette?
Embleming love and health, which never yet
In the same wreath might be.
Alas, and they are wet!
Is it with thy kisses or thy tears?
For never rain or dew
Such fragrance drew

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From plant or flower—the very doubt endears
My sadness ever new,
The sighs I breathe, the tears I shed for thee.

March, 1821.

TO ———

I FEAR thy kisses, gentle maiden,
Thou needest not fear mine;
My spirit is too deeply laden
Ever to burthen thine.

I fear thy mien, thy tones, thy motion,
Thou needest not fear mine;
Innocent is the heart's devotion
With which I worship thine.

LINES.

WHEN the lamp is shattered
The light in the dust lies dead—
When the cloud is scattered,
The rainbow's glory is shed.
When the lute is broken,
Sweet tones are remembered not;
When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

As music and splendour
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute:—

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No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruined cell,
Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

When hearts have once mingled
Love first leaves the well-built nest,
The weak one is singled
To endure what it once possest.
O Love! who bewailest
The frailty of all things here,
Why choose you the frailest
For your cradle, your home, and your bier?

Its passions will rock thee
As the storms rock the ravens on high:
Bright reason will mock thee,
Like the sun from a wintry sky.
From thy nest every rafter
Will rot, and thine eagle home
Leave thee naked to laughter,
When leaves fall and cold winds come.

TO WILLIAM SHELLEY.

(With what truth I may say—
Roma! Roma! Roma!
Non e piu come era prima!)

My lost William, thou in whom
Some bright spirit lived, and did
That decaying robe consume
Which its lustre faintly hid,

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Here its ashes find a tomb,
But beneath this pyramid
Thou art not—if a thing divine
Like thee can die, thy funeral shrine
Is thy mother's grief and mine.

Where art thou, my gentle child?
Let me think thy spirit feeds,
Within its life intense and mild,
The love of living leaves and weeds,
Among these tombs and ruins wild;—
Let me think that through low seeds
Of the sweet flowers and sunny grass,
Into their hues and scents may pass,
A portion————

June, 1819.

AN ALLEGORY.

A PORTAL as of shadowy adamant
Stands yawning on the highway of the life
Which we all tread, a cavern huge and gaunt;
Around it rages an unceasing strife
Of shadows, like the restless clouds that haunt
The gap of some cleft mountain, lifted high
Into the whirlwinds of the upper sky.

And many passed it by with careless tread,
Not knowing that a shadowy [ ]
Tracks every traveller even to where the dead
Wait peacefully for their companion new;
But others, by more curious humour led,
Pause to examine,—these are very few,

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And they learn little there, except to know
That shadows follow them where'er they go.

MUTABILITY.

The flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow dies;
All that we wish to stay,
Tempts and then flies;
What is this world's delight?
Lightning that mocks the night,
Brief even as bright.

Virtue, how frail it is!
Friendship too rare!
Love, how it sells poor bliss
For proud despair!
But we, though soon they fall,
Survive their joy and all
Which ours we call.

Whilst skies are blue and bright,
Whilst flowers are gay,
Whilst eyes that change ere night
Make glad the day;
Whilst yet the calm hours creep,
Dream thou—and from thy sleep
Then wake to weep.

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FROM THE ARABIC.

AN IMITATION.

My faint spirit was sitting in the light
Of thy looks, my love;
It panted for thee like the hind at noon
For the brooks, my love.
Thy barb, whose hoofs outspeed the tempest's flight,
Bore thee far from me;
My heart, for my weak feet were weary soon,
Did companion thee.

Ah! fleeter far than fleetest storm or steed,
Or the death they bear,
The heart which tender thought clothes like a dove
With the wings of care;
In the battle, in the darkness, in the need,
Shall mine cling to thee,
Nor claim one smile for all the comfort, love,
It may bring to thee.

TO ———

One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it,
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it.
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother,
And Pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

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I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not,
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

MUSIC.

I PANT for the music which is divine,
My heart in its thirst is a dying flower;
Pour forth the sound like enchanted wine,
Loosen the notes in a silver shower;
Like a herbless plain, for the gentle rain,
I gasp, I faint, till they wake again.

Let me drink of the spirit of that sweet sound,
More, O more,—I am thirsting yet,
It loosens the serpent which care has bound
Upon my heart to stifle it;
The dissolving strain, through every vein,
Passes into my heart and brain.

As the scent of a violet withered up,
Which grew by the brink of a silver lake;
When the hot noon has drained its dewy cup,
And mist there was none its thirst to slake—
And the violet lay dead while the odour flew
On the wings of the wind o'er the waters blue—

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As one who drinks from a charmed cup
Of foaming, and sparkling, and murmuring wine,
Whom, a mighty Enchantress filling up,
Invites to love with her kiss divine.

* * * * *
* * * * *

LINES.

The cold earth slept below;
Above the cold sky shone;
And all around,
With a chilling sound,
From caves of ice and fields of snow,
The breath of night like death did flow
Beneath the sinking moon.

The wintry hedge was black,
The green grass was not seen,
The birds did rest
On the bare thorn's breast,
Whose roots, beside the pathway track,
Had bound their folds o'er many a crack
Which the frost had made between.

Thine eyes glowed in the glare
Of the moon's dying light;
As a fen-fire's beam,
On a sluggish stream,
Gleams dimly—so the moon shone there,
And it yellowed the strings of thy tangled hair
That shook in the wind of night.

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The moon made thy lips pale, beloved;
The wind made thy bosom chill;
The night did shed
On thy dear head
Its frozen dew, and thou didst lie
Where the bitter breath of the naked sky
Might visit thee at will.

November, 1815.

DEATH.

Death is here and death is there,
Death is busy every where,
All around, within, beneath,
Above, is death—and we are death.

Death has set his mark and seal
On all we are and all we feel,
On all we know and all we fear,
* * * * *

First our pleasures die—and then
Our hopes, and then our fears—and when
These are dead, the debt is due,
Dust claims dust—and we die too.

All things that we love and cherish,
Like ourselves must fade and perish.
Such is our rude mortal lot,
Love itself would, did they not.

o

Digitized by Google

TO ———

When passion's trance is overpast,
If tenderness and truth could last
Or live, whilst all wild feelings keep
Some mortal slumber, dark and deep,
I should not weep, I should not weep!

It were enough to feel, to see
Thy soft eyes gazing tenderly,
And dream the rest—and burn and be
The secret food of fires unseen,
Couldst thou but be as thou hast been.

After the slumber of the year
The woodland violets re-appear,
All things revive in field or grove,
And sky and sea, but two, which move,
And for all others, life and love.

PASSAGE OF THE APENNINES.

Listen, listen, Mary mine,
To the wisper of the Apennine,
It bursts on the roof like the thunder's roar,
Or like the sea on a northern shore,
Heard in its raging ebb and flow
By the captives pent in the cave below.
The Apennine in the light of day
Is a mighty mountain dim and grey,
Which between the earth and sky doth lay;

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But when night comes, a chaos dread
On the dim starlight then is spread,
And the Apennine walks abroad with the storm.

May 4th, 1818.

TO MARY———

O Mary dear, that you were here
With your brown eyes bright and clear,
And your sweet voice, like a bird
Singing love to its lone mate
In the ivy bower disconsolate;
Voice the sweetest ever heard!
And your brow more * * *
Than the * * * sky
Of this azure Italy.
Mary dear, come to me soon,
I am not well whilst thou art far;
As sunset to the sphered moon,
As twilight to the western star,
Thou, beloved, art to me.

O Mary dear, that you were here!
The Castle echo whispers "Here!"

Este, September, 1818.

THE PAST.

Wilt thou forget the happy hours
Which we buried in Love's sweet bowers,
Heaping over their corpses cold
Blossoms and leaves, instead of mould?

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Blossoms which were the joys that fell,
And leaves, the hopes that yet remain.

Forget the dead, the past? O yet
There are ghosts that may take revenge for it,
Memories that make the heart a tomb,
Regrets which glide through the spirit's gloom,
And with ghastly whispers tell
That joy, once lost, is pain.

SONG OF A SPIRIT.

Within the silent centre of the earth
My mansion is; where I have lived insphered
From the beginning, and around my sleep
Have woven all the wondrous imagery
Of this dim spot, which mortals call the world;
Infinite depths of unknown elements
Massed into one impenetrable mask;
Sheets of immeasurable fire, and veins
Of gold, and stone, and adamantine iron.
And as a veil in which I walk through Heaven
I have wrought mountains, seas, and waves, and clouds,
And lastly light, whose interfusion dawns
In the dark space of interstellar air.

LIBERTY.

The fiery mountains answer each other;
Their thunderings are echoed from zone to zone;

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The tempestuous oceans awake one another,
And the ice-rocks are shaken round winter's zone
When the clarion of the Typhoon is blown.

From a single cloud the lightning flashes,
Whilst a thousand isles are illumined around,
Earthquake is trampling one city to ashes,
A hundred are shuddering and tottering; the sound
Is bellowing underground.

But keener thy gaze than the lightning's glare,
And swifter thy step than the earthquake's tramp;
Thou deafenest the rage of the ocean; thy stare
Makes blind the volcanos; the sun's bright lamp
To thine is a fen-fire damp.

From billow and mountain and exhalation
The sunlight is darted through vapour and blast;
From spirit to spirit, from nation to nation,
From city to hamlet, thy dawning is cast,—
And tyrants and slaves are like shadows of night
In the van of the morning light.

TO ———

Mine eyes were dim with tears unshed;
Yes, I was firm—thus wert not thou;—
My baffled looks did fear yet dread
To meet thy looks—I could not know
How anxiously they sought to shine
With soothing pity upon mine.

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To sit and curb the soul's mute rage
  Which preys upon itself alone;
To curse the life which is the cage
  Of fettered grief that dares not groan,
Hiding from many a careless eye
The scorned load of agony.

Whilst thou alone, then not regarded,
  The [ ] thou alone should be,
To spend years thus, and be rewarded,
  As thou, sweet love, requited me
When none were near—Oh! I did wake
From torture for that moment's sake.

Upon my heart thy accents sweet
  Of peace and pity fell like dew
On flowers half dead;—thy lips did meet
  Mine tremblingly; thy dark eyes threw
Their soft persuasion on my brain,
Charming away its dream of pain.

We are not happy, sweet; our state
  Is strange and full of doubt and fear;
More need of words that ills abate;—
  Reserve or censure come not near
Our sacred friendship, lest there be
No solace left for thou and me.

Gentle and good and mild thou art,
  Nor can I live if you appear
Aught but thyself, or turn thine heart
  Away from me, or stoop to wear
The mask of scorn, although it be
To hide the love you feel for me.

Digitized by Google

THE ISLE.

There was a little lawny islet
By anemone and violet,
Like mosaic, paven:
And its roof was flowers and leaves
Which the summer's breath enweaves,
Where nor sun nor showers nor breeze
Pierce the pines and tallest trees,
Each a gem engraven.
Girt by many an azure wave
With which the clouds and mountains pave
A lake's blue chasm.

TO ———

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory—
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

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TIME.

Unfathomable Sea! whose waves are years,
Ocean of Time, whose waters of deep woe
Are brackish with the salt of human tears!
Thou shoreless flood, which in thy ebb and flow
Claspest the limits of mortality!
And sick of prey, yet howling on for more,
Vomitest thy wrecks on its inhospitable shore.
Treacherous in calm, and terrible in storm,
Who shall put forth on thee,
Unfathomable Sea?

LINES.

That time is dead for ever, child,
Drowned, frozen, dead for ever!
We look on the past,
And stare aghast
At the spectres wailing, pale, and ghast,
Of hopes which thou and I beguiled
To death on life's dark river.

The stream we gazed on then rolled by;
Its waves are unreturning;
But we yet stand
In a lone land,
Like tombs to mark the memory
Of hopes and fears, which fade and flee
In the light of life's dim morning.

November 5th, 1817.

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A SONG.

A WIDOW bird sate mourning for her love
Upon a wintry bough;
The frozen wind crept on above,
The freezing stream below.

There was no leaf upon the forest bare,
No flower upon the ground,
And little motion in the air
Except the mill-wheel's sound.

THE WORLD'S WANDERERS.

TELL me, thou star, whose wings of light
Speed thee in thy fiery flight,
In what cavern of the night
Will thy pinions close now?

Tell me, moon, thou pale and grey
Pilgrim of heaven's homeless way,
In what depth of night or day
Seekest thou repose now?

Weary wind, who wanderest
Like the world's rejected guest,
Hast thou still some secret nest
On the tree or billow?

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A DIRGE.

Rough wind, that moanest loud
Grief too sad for song;
Wild wind, when sullen cloud
Knells all the night long;
Sad storm, whose tears are vain,
Bare woods, whose branches stain,
Deep caves and dreary main,
Wail, for the world's wrong!

LINES.

Far, far away, O ye
Halcyons of memory,
Seek some far calmer nest
Than this abandoned breast;—
No news of your false spring
To my heart's winter bring;
Once having gone, in vain
Ye come again.

Vultures, who build your bowels
High in the Future's towers,
Withered hopes on hopes are spread,
Dying joys, choked by the dead,
Will serve your beaks for prey
Many a day.

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DIRGE FOR THE YEAR.

Orphan hours, the year is dead,
Come and sigh, come and weep!
Merry hours, smile instead,
For the year is but asleep.
See, it smiles as it is sleeping,
Mocking your untimely weeping.

As an earthquake rocks a corse
In its coffin in the clay,
So White Winter, that rough nurse,
Rocks the dead-cold year to-day;
Solemn hours! wait aloud
For your mother in her shroud.

As the wild air stirs and sways
The tree-swung cradle of a child,
So the breath of these rude days
Rocks the year:—be calm and mild,
Trembling hours; she will arise
With new love within her eyes.

January grey is here,
Like a sexton by her grave;
February bears the bier,
March with grief doth howl and rave,
And April weeps—but, O ye hours,
Follow with May's fairest flowers.

January 1st, 1821.

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SONNET I.

Ye hasten to the dead! What seek ye there,
Ye restless thoughts and busy purposes
Of the idle brain, which the world's livery wear?
O thou quick Heart, which pantest to possess
All that anticipation feigneth fair!
Thou vainly curious mind which wouldest guess
Whence thou didst come, and whither thou may'st go,
And that which never yet was known wouldst know—
Oh, whither hasten ye that thus ye press
With such swift feet life's green and pleasant path,
Seeking alike from happiness and woe
A refuge in the cavern of grey death?
O heart, and mind, and thoughts! What thing do you
Hope to inherit in the grave below?

SONNET II.

POLITICAL GREATNESS.

Nor happiness, nor majesty, nor fame,
Nor peace, nor strength, nor skill in arms or arts,
Shepherd those herds whom tyranny makes tame;
Verse echoes not one beating of their hearts,
History is but the shadow of their shame,
Art veils her glass, or from the pageant starts
As to oblivion their blind millions fleet,
Staining that Heaven with obscene imagery
Of their own likeness. What are numbers knit
By force or custom? Man who man would be,
Must rule the empire of himself; in it

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Must be supreme, establishing his throne
On vanquished will, quelling the anarchy
Of hopes and fears, being himself alone.

SONNET III.

Alas! good friend, what profit can you see
In hating such a hateless thing as me?
There is no sport in hate where all the rage
Is on one side. In vain would you assuage
Your frowns upon an unresisting smile,
In which not even contempt lurks, to beguile
Your heart, by some faint sympathy of hate.
Oh conquer what you cannot satiate!
For to your passion I am far more coy
Than ever yet was coldest maid or boy
In winter noon. Of your antipathy
If I am the Narcissus, you are free
To pine into a sound with hating me.

SONNET IV.

Lift not the painted veil which those who live
Call Life: though unreal shapes be pictured there,
And it but mimic all we would believe
With colours idly spread:—behind, lurk Fear
And Hope, twin destinies; who ever weave
The shadows, which the world calls substance, there.

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I knew one who had lifted it—he sought,
For his lost heart was tender, things to love,
But found them not, alas! nor was there aught
The world contains, the which he could approve.
Through the unheeding many he did move,
A splendour among shadows, a bright blot
Upon this gloomy scene, a Spirit that strove
For truth, and like the Preacher found it not.

FRAGMENTS.

GINEVRA.*

Wild, pale, and wonder-stricken, even as one
Who staggers forth into the air and sun
From the dark chamber of a mortal fever,
Bewildered, and incapable, and ever
Fancying strange comments in her dizzy brain
Of usual shapes, till the familiar train
Of objects and of persons passed like things
Strange as a dreamer's mad imaginings,
Ginevra from the nuptial altar went;
The vows to which her lips had sworn assent
Rung in her brain still with a jarring din,
Deafening the lost intelligence within.

And so she moved under the bridal veil.
Which made the paleness of her cheek more pale,

* This fragment is part of a poem which Mr. Shelley intended to write, founded on a story to be found in the first volume of a book entitled "L'Osservatore Fiorentino."

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And deepened the faint crimson of her mouth,
And darkened her dark locks, as moonlight doth,—
And of the gold and jewels glittering there
She scarce felt conscious,—but the weary glare
Lay like a chaos of unwelcome light,
Vexing the sense with gorgeous undelight.
A moonbeam in the shadow of a cloud
Was less heavenly fair—her face was bowed,
And as she passed, the diamonds in her hair
Were mirrored in the polished marble stair
Which led from the cathedral to the street;
And even as she went her light fair feet
Erased these images.

The bride-maidens who round her thronging came,
Some with a sense of self-rebuke and shame,
Envying the unenviable; and others
Making the joy which should have been another's
Their own by gentle sympathy; and some
Sighing to think of an unhappy home;
Some few admiring what can ever lure
Maidens to leave the heaven serene and pure
Of parents' smiles for life's great cheat; a thing
Bitter to taste, sweet in imagining!

But they are all dispersed—and lo! she stands
Looking in idle grief on her white hands,
Alone within the garden now her own;
And through the sunny air, with jangling tone,
The music of the merry marriage bells,
Killing the azure silence, sinks and swells;—
Absorbed like one within a dream who dream
That he is dreaming, until slumber seems
A mockery of itself—when suddenly

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Antonio stood before her, pale as she.
With agony, with sorrow, and with pride,
He lifted his wan eyes upon the bride,
And said—"Is this thy faith?" and then as one
Whose sleeping face is stricken by the sun
With light like a harsh voice, which bids him rise
And look upon his day of life with eyes
Which weep in vain that they can dream no more,
Ginevra saw her lover, and forbore
To shriek or faint, and checked the stifling blood
Rushing upon her heart, and unsubdued
Said—"Friend, if earthly violence or ill,
Suspicion, doubt, or the tyrannic will
Of parents, chance, or custom, time, or change,
Or circumstance, or terror, or revenge,
Or wildered looks, or words, or evil speech,
With all their strings [ ] can impeach
Our love,—we love not:—if the grave which hides
The victim from the tyrant, and divides
The cheek that whitens from the eyes that dart
Imperious inquisition to the heart
That is another's, could dissever ours,
We love not."—"What! do not the silent hours
Beckon thee to Gherardi's bridal bed?
Is not that ring"——a pledge, he would have said,
Of broken vows, but she with patient look
The golden circle from her finger took,
And said—"Accept this token of my faith,
The pledge of vows to be absolved by death;
And I am dead or shall be soon—my knell
Will mix its music with that merry bell.
Does it not sound as if they sweetly said
'We toll a corpse out of the marriage bed?'
The flowers upon my bridal chamber strewn

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Will serve unfaded for my bier—so soon
That even the dying violet will not die
Before Ginevra." The strong fantasy
Had made her accents weaker and more weak,
And quenched the crimson life upon her cheek,
And glazed her eyes, and spread an atmosphere
Round her, which chilled the burning noon with fear,
Making her but an image of the thought,
Which, like a prophet or a shadow, brought
News of the terrors of the coming time,
Like an accuser branded with the crime
He would have cast on a beloved friend,
Whose dying eyes reproach not to the end
The pale betrayer—he then with vain repentance
Would share, he cannot now avert, the sentence—
Antonio stood and would have spoken, when
The compound voice of women and of men
Was heard approaching; he retired, while she
Was led amid the admiring company
Back to the palace,—and her maidens soon
Changed her attire for the afternoon,
And left her at her own request to keep
An hour of quiet and rest:—like one asleep
With open eyes and folded hands she lay,
Pale in the light of the declining day.

Meanwhile the day sinks fast, the sun is set,
And in the lighted hall the guests are met;
The beautiful looked lovelier in the light
Of love, and admiration, and delight.
Reflected from a thousand hearts and eyes
Kindling a momentary Paradise.
This crowd is safer than the silent wood,
Where love's own doubts disturb the solitude

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On frozen hearts the fiery rain of wine
Falls, and the dew of music more divine
Tempers the deep emotions of the time
To spirits cradled in a sunny clime:—
How many meet, who never yet have met,
To part too soon, but never to forget!
How many saw the beauty, power, and wit,
Of looks and words which ne'er enchanted yet!
But life's familiar veil was now withdrawn,
As the world leaps before an earthquake's dawn,
And unprophetic of the coming hours,
The matin winds from the expanded flowers
Scatter their hoarded incense, and awaken
The earth, until the dewy sleep is shaken
From every living heart which it possesses,
Through seas and winds, cities and wildernesses,
As if the future and the past were all
Treasured i'the instant;—so Gherardi's hall
Laughed in the mirth of its lord's festival,
Till some one asked—"Where is the Bride?" And then
A bride's-maid went,—and ere she came again
A silence fell upon the guests—a pause
Of expectation, as when beauty awes
All hearts with its approach, though unbeheld;
Then wonder, and then fear that wonder quelled;—
For whispers passed from mouth to ear which drew
The colour from the hearer's cheeks, and flew
Louder and swifter round the company;
And then Gherardi entered with an eye
Of ostentatious trouble, and a crowd
Surrounded him, and some were weeping loud.

They found Ginevra dead! if it be death,
To lie without motion, or pulse, or breath,

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With waxen cheeks, and limbs cold, stiff, and white,
And open eyes, whose fixed and glassy light
Mocked at the speculation they had owned.
If it be death, when there is felt around
A smell of clay, a pale and icy glare,
And silence, and a sense that lifts the hair
From the scalp to the ancles, as it were
Corruption from the spirit passing forth,
And giving all it shrouded to the earth,
And leaving as swift lightning in its flight
Ashes, and smoke, and darkness: in our night
Of thought we know thus much of death,—no more
Than the unborn dream of our life before
Their barks are wrecked on its inhospitable shore.
The marriage feast and its solemnity
Was turned to funeral pomp—the company,
With heavy hearts and looks, broke up; nor they
Who loved the dead went weeping on their way
Alone, but sorrow mixed with sad surprise
Loosened the springs of pity in all eyes,
On which that form, whose fate they weep in vain,
Will never, thought they, kindle smiles again.
The lamps which half extinguished in their haste
Gleamed few and faint o'er the abandoned feast,
Shewed as it were within the vaulted room
A cloud of sorrow hanging, as if gloom
Had passed out of men's minds into the air.
Some few yet stood around Gherardi there,
Friends and relations of the dead,—and he,
A loveless man, accepted torpidly
The consolation that he wanted not,
Awe in the palace of grief within him wrought.
Their whispers made the solemn silence seem
More still—some wept, [.]

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Some melted into tears without a sob,
And some with hearts that might be heard to thr
Leant on the table, and at intervals
Shuddered to hear through the deserted halls
And corridors the thrilling shrieks which came
Upon the breeze of night, that shook the flame
Of every torch and taper as it swept
From out the chamber where the women kept;—
Their tears fell on the dear companion cold
Of pleasures now departed; then was knolled
The bell of death, and soon the priests arrived,
And finding death their penitent had shrived,
Returned like ravens from a corpse whereon
A vulture has just feasted to the bone.
And then the mourning women came.—

* * * * * *

THE DIRGE.

Old winter was gone
In his weakness back to the mountains hoar,
And the spring came down
From the planet that hovers upon the shore
Where the sea of sunlight encroaches
On the limits of wintry night;—
If the land, and the air, and the sea,
Rejoice not when spring approaches,
We did not rejoice in thee,
Ginevra!

She is still, she is cold
On the bridal couch,
One step to the white death bed,
And one to the bier,

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And one to the charnel—and one, Oh where?
The dark arrow fled
In the noon.

Ere the sun through heaven once more has rolled,
The rats in her heart
Will have made their nest,
And the worms be alive in her golden hair,
While the spirit that guides the sun
Sits throned in his flaming chair,
She shall sleep.

* * * * * *

Pisa, 1821.

CHARLES THE FIRST.

FRAGMENT.

ACT I. SCENE I.

The Pageant to [*celebrate*] *the arrival of the Queen.*

A Pursuivant. PLACE for the Marshal of the Masque!
1*st. Speaker.* What thinkest thou of this quaint masque, which turns,
Like morning from the shadow of the night,
The night to day, and London to a place
Of peace and joy?
2*nd. Speaker.* And Hell to Heaven.
Eight years are gone,
And they seem hours, since in this populous street
I trod on grass made green by summer's rain,

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For the red plague kept state within that pa
Where now reigns vanity—in nine years mo
The roots will be refreshed with civil blood ;
And thank the mercy of insulted Heaven
That sin and wrongs wound as an orphan's c
The patience of the great avenger's ear.

3rd Spe. (a youth). Yet, father, tis a hap
Beautiful, innocent, and unforbidden
By God or man ;—'tis like the bright processi
Of skiey visions in a solemn dream
From which men wake as from a paradise,
And draw new strength to tread the thorns o
If God be good, wherefore should this be evil
And if this be not evil, dost thou not draw
Unseasonable poison from the flowers
Which bloom so rarely in this barren world ?
Oh, kill these bitter thoughts which make the
Dark as the future !—

* * * * * *

When avarice and tyranny, vigilant fear,
And open-eyed conspiracy, lie sleeping
As on Hell's threshold ; and all gentle thoug
Waken to worship him who giveth joys
With his own gift.

2nd Spe. How young art thou in this old a
How green in this grey world ! Canst thou no
Of change in that low scene, in which thou a
Not a spectator but an actor ? [ ]
The day that dawns in fire will die in storms,
Even though the noon be calm. My travel's d
Before the whirlwind wakes I shall have foun
My inn of lasting rest, but thou must still
Be journeying on in this inclement air.

* * * * *

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1st Spe. That
Is the Archbishop.
2nd Spe. Rather say the Pope.
London will be soon his Rome: he walks
As if he trod upon the heads of men.
He looks elate, drunken with blood and gold;—
Beside him moves the Babylonian woman
Invisibly, and with her as with his shadow,
Mitred adulterer! he is joined in sin,
Which turns Heaven's milk of mercy to revenge.
Another Citizen (*lifting up his eyes*). Good Lord! rain
it down upon him. [ ]
Amid her ladies walks the papist queen,
As if her nice feet scorned our English earth.
There's old Sir Henry Vane, the Earl of Pembroke,
Lord Essex, and Lord Keeper Coventry,
And others who made base their English breed
By vile participation of their honours
With papists, atheists, tyrants, and apostates.
When lawyers mask 'tis time for honest men
To strip the vizor from their purposes.
* * * * * * *
4th Spe. a (pursuivant) Give place, give place!
You torch-bearers advance to the great gate,
And then attend the Marshal of the Masque
Into the Royal presence.
Fifth Spe. (*a law student*). What thinkest thou
Of this quaint show of ours, my aged friend?
1st Spe. I will not think but that our country's wounds
May yet be healed—The king is just and gracious,
Though wicked counsels now pervert his will:
These once cast off—
2nd Spe. As adders cast their skins
And keep their venom, so kings often change;
Councils and counsellors hang on one another,

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Hiding the loathsome [ ]
Like the base patchwork of a leper's rags.

3d Sp. Oh, still those dissonant thoughts—List, loud music
Grows on the enchanted air! And see, the torches
Restlessly flashing, and the crowd divided
Like waves before an admiral's prow.

* * * * * *

Another Spe. Give place—
To the Marshal of the Masque!

3rd Spe. How glorious! See those thronging chariots
Rolling like painted clouds before the wind:
Some are
Like curved shells dyed by the azure depths
Of Indian seas; some like the new-born moon;
And some like cars in which the Romans climbed
(Canopied by Victory's eagle-wings outspread)
The Capitolian—See how gloriously
The mettled horses in the torchlight stir
Their gallant riders, while they check their pride
Like the shapes of some diviner element!

2nd Spe. Aye, there they are—
Nobles, and sons of nobles, patentees,
Monopolists, and stewards of this poor farm,
On whose lean sheep sit the prophetic crows.
Here is the pomp that strips the houseless orphan,
Here is the pride that breaks the desolate heart.
These are the lilies glorious as Solomon,
Who toil not, neither do they spin,—unless
It be the webs they catch poor rogues withal.
Here is the surfeit which to them who earn
The niggard wages of the earth, scarce leaves
The tithe that will support them till they crawl
Back to its cold hard bosom. Here is health
Followed by grim disease, glory by shame,

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Waste by lame famine, wealth by squalid want,
And England's sin by England's punishment.
And, as the effect pursues the cause foregone,
Lo, giving substance to my words, behold
At once the sign and the thing signified—
A troop of cripples, beggars, and lean outcasts,
Horses upon stumbling shapes, carted with dung,
Dragged for a day from cellars and low cabins
And rotten hiding-holes to point the moral
Of this presentiment, and bring up the rear
Of painted pomp with misery!

Spe. 'Tis but
The anti-masque, and serves as discords do
In sweetest music. Who would love May flowers
If they succeeded not to Winter's flaw;
Or day unchanged by night; or joy itself
Without the touch of sorrow?

* * * * * *

SCENE II.

A Chamber in Whitehall.

Enter the KING, QUEEN, LAUD, WENTWORTH, *and* ARCHY.

King. Thanks, gentlemen. I heartily accept
This token of your service: your gay masque
Was performed gallantly.

Queen. And, gentlemen,
Call your poor Queen your debtor. Your quaint pageant
Rose on me like the figures of past years,
Treading their still path back to infancy,
More beautiful and mild as they draw nearer

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The quiet cradle. I could have almost wept
To think I was in Paris, where these shows
Are well devised—such as I was ere yet
My young heart shared with [ ] the task
The careful weight of this great monarchy.
There, gentlemen, between the sovereign's pleasure
And that which it regards, no clamour lifts
Its proud interposition.

* * * * * *

King. My lord of Canterbury.

Archy. The fool is here.

Laud. I crave permission of your Majesty
To order that this insolent fellow be
Chastised: he mocks the sacred character,
Scoffs at the stake, and—

King. What, my Archy!
He mocks and mimics all he sees and hears,
Yet with a quaint and graceful licence—Prithee
For this once do not as Prynne would, were he
Primate of England.
He lives in his own world; and, like a parrot,
Hung in his gilded prison from the window
Of a queen's bower over the public way,
Blasphemes with a bird's mind:—his words, like arrows
Which know no aim beyond the archer's wit,
Strike sometimes what eludes philosophy.

Queen. Go, sirrah, and repent of your offence
Ten minutes in the rain: be it your penance
To bring news how the world goes there. Poor Archy
He weaves about himself a world of mirth
Out of this wreck of ours.

Laud. I take with patience, as my master did,
All scoffs permitted from above.

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King. My Lord,
Pray overlook these papers. Archy's words
Had wings, but these have talons.
Queen. And the lion
That wears them must be tamed. My dearest lord,
I see the new-born courage in your eye
Armed to strike dead the spirit of the time.
* * * * *
Do thou persist: for, faint but in resolve,
And it were better thou hadst still remained
The slave of thine own slaves, who tear like curs
The fugitive, and flee from the pursuer;
And Opportunity, that empty wolf,
Flies at his throat who falls. Subdue thy actions
Even to the disposition of thy purpose,
And be that tempered as the Ebro's steel;
And banish weak-eyed Mercy to the weak,
Whence she will greet thee with a gift of peace,
And now betray thee with a traitor's kiss,
As when she keeps the company of rebels,
Who think that she is fear. This do, lest we
Should fall as from a glorious pinnacle
In a bright dream, and wake as from a dream
Out of our worshipped state.
* * * * *
Laud. * * And if this suffice not,
Unleash the sword and fire, that in their thirst
They may lick up that scum of schismatics.
I laugh at those weak rebels who, desiring
What we possess, still prate of christian peace,
As if those dreadful messengers of wrath,
Which play the part of God 'twixt right and wrong,
Should be let loose against innocent sleep
Of templed cities and the smiling fields,

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For some poor argument of policy
Which touches our own profit or our pride,
Where it indeed were christian charity
To turn the cheek even to the smiter's hand:
And when our great Redeemer, when our God
Is scorned in his immediate ministers,
They talk of peace!
Such peace as Canaan found, let Scotland now.

* * * * * *

Queen. My beloved lord,
Have you not noted that the fool of late
Has lost his careless mirth, and that his words
Sound like the echoes of our saddest fears?
What can it mean? I should be loth to think
Some factious slave had tutored him.

King. It partly is,
That our minds piece the vacant intervals
Of his wild words with their own fashioning;
As in the imagery of summer clouds,
Or coals in the winter fire, idlers find
The perfect shadows of their teeming thoughts:
And partly, that the terrors of the time
Are sown by wandering Rumour in all spirits;
And in the lightest and the least, may best
Be seen the current of the coming wind.

Qu. Your brain is overwrought with these deep thoughts.
Come, I will sing to you; let us go try
These airs from Italy,—and you shall see
A cradled miniature of yourself asleep,
Stamped on the heart by never-erring love;
Liker than any Vandyke ever made,
A pattern to the unborn age of thee,
Over whose sweet beauty I have wept for joy
A thousand times, and now should weep for sorrow,

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Did I not think that after we were dead
Our fortunes would spring high in him, and that
The cares we waste upon our heavy crown
Would make it light and glorious as a wreath
Of heaven's beams for his dear innocent brow.

King. Dear Henrietta!

* * * * *

SCENE III.

HAMPDEN, PYM, CROMWELL, *and the younger* VANE.

Hamp. England, farewell! thou, who hast been my cradle,
Shalt never be my dungeon or my grave!
I held what I inherited in thee
As pawn for that inheritance of freedom
Which thou hast sold for thy despoiler's smile:—
How can I call thee England, or my country?
Does the wind hold?

Vane. The vanes sit steady
Upon the Abbey towers. The silver lightnings
Of the evening star, spite of the city's smoke,
Tell that the north wind reigns in the upper air.
Mark too that flock of fleecy winged clouds
Sailing athwart St. Margaret's.

Hamp. Hail, fleet herald
Of tempest! that wild pilot who shall guide
Hearts free as his, to realms as pure as thee,
Beyond the shot of tyranny! And thou,
Fair star, whose beam lies on the wide Atlantic,
Athwart its zones of tempest and of calm,
Bright as the path to a beloved home,
Oh light us to the isles of th' evening land!

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Like floating Edens, cradled in the glimmer
Of sunset, through the distant mist of years
Tinged by departing Hope, they gleam! Lone regions,
Where power's poor dupes and victims yet have never
Propitiated the savage fear of kings
With purest blood of noblest hearts; whose dew
Is yet unstained with tears of those who wake
To weep each day the wrongs on which it dawns;
Whose sacred silent air owns yet no echo
Of formal blasphemies; nor impious rites
Wrest man's free worship from the God who loves
Towards the worm, who envies us his love,
Receive thou, young [ ] of Paradise,
These exiles from the old and sinful world!
This glorious clime, this firmament, whose lights
Dart mitigated influence through the veil
Of pale blue atmosphere; whose tears keep green
The pavement of this moist all-feeding earth;
This vaporous horizon, whose dim round
Is bastioned by the circumfluous sea,
Repelling invasion from the sacred towers;
Presses upon me like a dungeon's grate,
A low dark roof, a damp and narrow vault:
The mighty universe becomes a cell
Too narrow for the soul that owns no master,
While the loathliest spot
Of this wide prison, England, is a nest
Of cradled peace built on the mountain tops,
To which the eagle-spirits of the free,
Which range through heaven and earth, and scorn the storm
Of time, and gaze upon the light of truth,
Return to brood over the [ ] thoughts
That cannot die, and may not be repelled.

* * * *

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PRINCE ATHANASE.

PART II.

FRAGMENT I.

Prince Athanase had one beloved friend,
An old, old man, with hair of silver white,
And lips where heavenly smiles would hang and blend

With his wise words; and eyes whose arrowy light
Shone like the reflex of a thousand minds.
He was the last whom superstition's blight

Had spared in Greece—the blight that cramps and blinds,—
And in his olive bower at Œnoe
Had sate from earliest youth. Like one who finds

A fertile island in the barren sea,
One mariner who has survived his mates
Many a drear month in a great ship—so he

With soul-sustaining songs, and sweet debates
Of ancient lore, there fed his lonely being :—
"The mind becomes that which it contemplates,"—

And thus Zonoras, by for ever seeing
Their bright creations, grew like wisest men;
And when he heard the crash of nations fleeing

A bloodier power than ruled thy ruins then,
O sacred Hellas! many weary years
He wandered, till the path of Laian's glen

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Was grass grown—and the unremembered tears
Were dry in Laian for their honoured chief,
Who fell in Byzant, pierced by Moslem spears:—

And as the lady looked with faithful grief
From her high lattice o'er the rugged path,
Where she once saw that horseman toil, with brief

And blighting hope, who with the news of death
Struck body and soul as with a mortal blight,
She saw beneath the chesnuts, far beneath,

An old man toiling up, a weary wight;
And soon within her hospitable hall
She saw his white hairs glittering in the light

Of the wood fire, and round his shoulders fall;
And his wan visage and his withered mien
Yet calm and [ ] and majestical.

And Athanase, her child, who must have been
Then three years old, sate opposite and gazed.

FRAGMENT II.

Such was Zonoras; and as daylight finds
An amaranth glittering on the path of frost,
When autumn nights have nipt all weaker kinds,

Thus had his age, dark, cold, and tempest-tost,
Shone truth upon Zonoras; and he filled
From fountains pure, nigh overgrown and lost,

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The spirit of Prince Athanase, a child,
With soul-sustaining songs of ancient lore
And philosophic wisdom, clear and mild.

And sweet and subtle talk they evermore,
The pupil and the master shared; until,
Sharing the undiminishable store,

The youth, as shadows on a grassy hill
Outrun the winds that chase them, soon outran
His teacher, and did teach with native skill

Strange truths and new to that experienced man;
Still they were friends, as few have ever been
Who mark th' extremes of life's discordant span.

And in the caverns of the forest green,
Or by the rocks of echoing ocean hoar,
Zonoras and Prince Athanase were seen

By summer woodmen; and when winter's roar
Sounded o'er earth and sea its blast of war,
The Balearic fisher, driven from shore,

Hanging upon the peaked wave afar,
Then saw their lamp from Laian's turret gleam,
Piercing the stormy darkness like a star

Which pours beyond the sea one steadfast beam,
Whilst all the constellations of the sky
Seemed wrecked. They did but seem—

For, lo! the wintry clouds are all gone by,
And bright Arcturus through yon pines is glowing,
And far o'er southern waves, immoveably

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Belted Orion hangs—warm light is flowing
From the young moon into the sunset's chasm.—
"O summer night! with power divine, bestowing

"On thine own bird the sweet enthusiasm
Which overflows in notes of liquid gladness,
Filling the sky like light! How many a spasm

"Of fevered brains, oppressed with grief and madness,
Were lulled by thee, delightful nightingale!
And these soft waves, murmuring a gentle sadness,

"And the far sighings of yon piny dale
Made vocal by some wind, we feel not here.—
I bear alone what nothing may avail

"To lighten—a strange load!"—No human ear
Heard this lament; but o'er the visage wan
Of Athanase, a ruffling atmosphere

Of dark emotion, a swift shadow ran,
Like wind upon some forest-bosomed lake,
Glassy and dark.—And that divine old man

Beheld his mystic friend's whole being shake,
Even where its inmost depths were gloomiest—
And with a calm and measured voice he spake,

And, with a soft and equal pressure, prest
That cold lean hand:—"Dost thou remember yet
When the curved moon then lingering in the west

"Paused in yon waves her mighty horns to wet,
How in those beams we walked, half resting on the sea?
'Tis just one year—sure thou dost not forget—

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"Then Plato's words of light in thee and me
Lingered like moonlight in the moonless east,
For we had just then read—thy memory

"Is faithful now—the story of the feast;
And Agathon and Diotima seemed
From death and [ ] released.

FRAGMENT III.

'Twas at the season when the Earth upsprings
From slumber, as a sphered angel's child,
Shadowing its eyes with green and golden wings,

Stands up before its mother bright and mild,
Of whose soft voice the air expectant seems—
So stood before the sun, which shone and smiled

To see it rise thus joyous from its dreams,
The fresh and radiant Earth. The hoary grove
Waxed green—and flowers burst forth like starry beams;—

The grass in the warm sun did start and move,
And sea-buds burst under the waves serene:—
How many a one, though none be near to love,

Loves then the shade of his own soul, half seen
In any mirror—or the spring's young minions,
The winged leaves amid the copses green;—

How many a spirit then puts on the pinions
Of fancy, and outstrips the lagging blast,
And his own steps—and over wide dominions

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Sweeps in his dream-drawn chariot, far and fast,
More fleet than storms—the wide world shrinks below,
When winter and despondency are past.

'Twas at this season that Prince Athanase
Pass'd the white Alps—those eagle-baffling mountains
Slept in their shrouds of snow;—beside the ways

The waterfalls were voiceless—for their fountains
Were changed to mines of sunless crystal now,
Or by the curdling winds—like brazed wings

Which clanged along the mountain's marble brow,
Warped into adamantine fretwork, hung
And filled with frozen light the chasm below.

FRAGMENT IV.

Thou art the wine whose drunkenness is all
We can desire, O Love! and happy souls,
Ere from thy vine the leaves of autumn fall,

Catch thee, and feed from their o'erflowing bowls
Thousands who thirst for thy ambrosial dew;—
Thou art the radiance which where ocean rolls

Investest it; and when the heavens are blue
Thou fillest them; and when the earth is fair
The shadow of thy moving wings imbue

Its deserts and its mountains, till they wear
Beauty like some bright robe;—thou ever soarest
Among the towers of men, and as soft air

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In spring, which moves the unawakened forest,
Clothing with leaves its branches bare and bleak,
Thou floatest among men; and aye implorest

That which from thee they should implore:—the weak
Alone kneel to thee, offering up the hearts
The strong have broken—yet where shall any seek

A garment whom thou clothest not?

Marlow, 1817.

MAZENGHI.*

O! Foster-nurse of man's abandoned glory
Since Athens, its great mother, sunk in splendour,
Thou shadowest forth that mighty shape in story,
As ocean its wrecked fanes, severe yet tender:—
The light-invested angel Poesy
Was drawn from the dim world to welcome thee.

And thou in painting didst transcribe all taught
By loftiest meditations; marble knew
The sculptor's fearless soul—and, as he wrought,
The grace of his own power and freedom grew.
And more than all, heroic, just, sublime,
Thou wert among the false—was this thy crime?

Yes; and on Pisa's marble walls the twine
Of direst weeds hangs garlanded—the snake

* This fragment refers to an event, told in Sismodi's Histoire des Republiques Italiennes, which occurred during the war when Florence finally subdued Pisa, and reduced it to a province. The opening stanzas are addressed to the conquering city.

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Inhabits its wrecked palaces;—in thine
A beast of subtler venom now doth make
Its lair, and sits amid their glories overthrown,
And thus thy victim's fate is as thine own.

The sweetest flowers are ever frail and rare,
And love and freedom blossom but to wither;
And good and ill like vines entangled are,
So that their grapes may oft be plucked together;—
Divide the vintage ere thou drink, then make
Thy heart rejoice for dead Mazenghi's sake.

No record of his crime remains in story,
But, if the morning bright as evening shone,
It was some high and holy deed, by glory
Pursued into forgetfulness, which won
From the blind crowd he made secure and free
The patriot's meed, toil, death, and infamy.

For when by sound of trumpet was declared
A price upon his life, and there was set
A penalty of blood on all who shared
So much of water with him as might wet
His lips, which speech divided not—he went
Alone, as you may guess, to banishment.

Amid the mountains, like a hunted beast,
He hid himself, and hunger, cold, and toil,
Month after month endured; it was a feast
Whene'er he found those globes of deep red gold
Which in the woods the strawberry-tree doth bear,
Suspended in their emerald atmosphere.

And in the roofless huts of vast morasses,
Deserted by the fever-stricken serf,

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All overgrown with reeds and long rank grasses,
And hillocks heaped of moss-inwoven turf,
And where the huge and speckled aloe made,
Rooted in stones, a broad and pointed shade,

He housed himself. There is a point of strand
Near Vada's tower and town; and on one side
The treacherous marsh divides it from the land,
Shadowed by pine and ilex forests wide,
And on the other creeps eternally,
Through muddy weeds, the shallow sullen sea.

Naples, 1818.

THE WOODMAN AND THE NIGHTINGALE.

A WOODMAN, whose rough heart was out of tune
(I think such hearts yet never came to good,)
Hated to hear, under the stars or moon,

One nightingale in an interfluous wood
Satiate the hungry dark with melody;—
And, as a vale is watered by a flood,

Or as the moonlight fills the open sky
Struggling with darkness—as a tuberose
Peoples some Indian dell with scents which lie

Like clouds above the flower from which they rose,
The singing of that happy nightingale
In this sweet forest, from the golden close

Of evening till the star of dawn may fail,
Was interfused upon the silentness;
The folded roses and the violets pale

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Heard her within their slumbers, the abyss
Of heaven with all its planets; the dull ear
Of the night-cradled earth; the loneliness

Of the circumfluous waters,—every sphere
And every flower and beam and cloud and wave,
And every wind of the mute atmosphere,

And every beast stretched in its rugged cave,
And every bird lulled on its mossy bough,
And every silver moth fresh from the grave,

Which is its cradle—ever from below
Aspiring like one who loves too fair, too far,
To be consumed within the purest glow

Of one serene and unapproached star,
As if it were a lamp of earthly light,
Unconscious, as some human lovers are,

Itself how low, how high beyond all height
The heaven where it would perish!—and every form
That worshipped in the temple of the night

Was awed into delight, and by the charm
Girt as with an interminable zone,
Whilst that sweet bird, whose music was a storm

Of sound, shook forth the dull oblivion
Out of their dreams; harmony became love
In every soul but one....

And so this man returned with axe and saw
At evening close from killing the tall treen,
The soul of whom by nature's gentle law

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Was each a wood-nymph, and kept ever green
The pavement and the roof of the wild copse,
Chequering the sunlight of the blue serene

With jagged leaves,—and from the forest tops
Singing the winds to sleep—or weeping oft
Fast showers of aerial water drops

Into their mother's bosom, sweet and soft,
Nature's pure tears which have no bitterness;—
Around the cradles of the birds aloft

They spread themselves into the loveliness
Of fan-like leaves, and over palid flowers
Hang like moist clouds:—or, where high branches kiss,

Make a green space among the silent bowers,
Like a vast fane in a metropolis,
Surrounded by the columns and the towers

All overwrought with branch-like traceries
In which there is religion—and the mute
Persuasion of unkindled melodies,

Odours and gleams and murmurs, which the lute
Of the blind pilot-spirit of the blast
Stirs as it sails, now grave and now acute,

Wakening the leaves and waves ere it has past
To such brief unison as on the brain
One tone, which never can recur, has cast,

One accent never to return again.

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TO THE MOON.

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven, and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth,—
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

SONG FOR TASSO.

I loved—alas! our life is love;
But when we cease to breathe and move
I do suppose love ceases too.
I thought, but not as now I do,
Keen thoughts and bright of linked lore,
Of all that men had thought before,
And all that nature shows, and more.

And still I love and still I think,
But strangely, for my heart can drink
The dregs of such despair, and live,
And love; [ ]
And if I think, my thoughts come fast;
I mix the present with the past,
And each seems uglier than the last.

Sometimes I see before me flee
A silver spirit's form, like thee,
O Leonora, and I sit
[ ] still watching it,

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Till by the grated casement's ledge
It fades, with such a sigh, as sedge
Breathes o'er the breezy streamlet's edge.

THE WANING MOON.

And like a dying lady, lean and pale,
Who totters forth, wrapt in a gauzy veil,
Out of her chamber, led by the insane
And feeble wanderings of her fading brain,
The moon arose up in the murky earth,
A white and shapeless mass.

EPITAPH.

These are two friends whose lives were undivided,
So let their memory be, now they have glided
Under the grave; let not their bones be parted,
For their two hearts in life were single hearted.

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ALASTOR;

OR,

THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE.

Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quærebam quid amarem amans amare.—*Confess. St. August.*

Earth, ocean, air, beloved brotherhood!
If our great Mother have imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness;
If autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the gray grass and bare boughs;
If spring's voluptuous paintings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses, have been dear to me;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast,
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred;—then forgive
This boast, beloved brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favour now!

Mother of this unfathomable world!
Favour my solemn song, for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only: I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black death
Keeps records of the trophies won from thee,

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Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost,
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchymist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
With my most innocent love, until strange tears
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charmed night
To render up thy charge.....and, though ne'er yet
Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary,
Enough from incommunicable dream,
And twilight phantasms and deep noonday thought,
Has shone within me, that serenely now,
And moveless as a long-forgotten lyre,
Suspended in the solitary dome
Of some mysterious and deserted fane,
I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain
May modulate with murmurs of the air,
And motions of the forests and the sea,
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb
No human hands with pious reverence reared,
But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness:
A lovely youth,—no mourning maiden decked
With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,
The lone couch of his everlasting sleep:
Gentle, and brave, and generous, no lorn bard
Breath'd o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh:

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He lived, he died, he sang, in solitude.
Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
And virgins, as unknown he pass'd, have sighed
And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
And Silence, too enamoured of that voice,
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision and bright silver dream,
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
The fountains of divine philosophy
Fled not his thirsting lips; and all of great,
Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
And knew. When early youth had past, he left
His cold fireside and alienated home
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness
Has lured his fearless steps; and he has bought
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
He, like her shadow, has pursued where'er
The red volcano overcanopies
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke; or where bitumen lakes
On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge; or where the secret caves
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
Of fire and poison, inaccessible
To avarice or pride, their starry domes
Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines

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Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
Nor had that scene, of ampler majesty
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth, lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder; he would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,
Until the doves and squirrels would partake
From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,
Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
Her timid steps, to gaze upon a form
More graceful than her own.

His wandering step,
Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
The awful ruins of the days of old:
Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphinx,
Dark Ethiopia on her desert hills
Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble demons watch
The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He lingered, pouring on memorials
Of the world's youth through the long burning day;
Gazed on those speechless shapes, nor, when the moon
Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades,
Suspended he that task, but ever gazed

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And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
Her daily portion, from her father's tent,
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
From duties and repose to tend his steps —
Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
To speak her love:—and watched his nightly sleep,
Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips
Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
Of innocent dreams arose: then, when red morn
Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home,
Wildered and wan and panting, she returned.

The Poet, wandering on through Arabie
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the aerial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way;
Till in the vale of Cachmire, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamt a veiled maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,

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And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire: wild numbers then
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos: her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burthen: at the sound he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom:—she drew back awhile,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course,
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

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Roused by the shock, he started from his trance—
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round where he stood.—Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of earth,
The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The spirit of sweet human love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade;
He overleaps the bound. Alas! alas!
Were limbs and breath and being interwined
Thus treacherously? Lost, lost, for ever lost,
In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep,
That beautiful shape! does the dark gate of death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,
Lead only to a black and watery depth,
While death's blue vault with loathliest vapours hung,
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conduct, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms?
This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart.
The insatiate hope which it awakened stung
His brain even like despair.

While day-light held
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
With his still soul. At night the passion came,

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Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness.—As an eagle, grasped
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
Burn with the poison, and precipitates
Through night and day, tempest, and calm, and cloud,
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight
O'er the wild aery wilderness, thus driven
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Startling with careless step the moon-light snake,
He fled.—Red morning dawned upon his flight,
Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on
Till vast Aornos seen from Petra's steep
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud;
Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs
Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,
Day after day, a weary waste of hours,
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean; his scattered hair,
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering,
Sung dirges in the wind; his listless hand
Hung like dead bone within its wither'd skin;
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone
As in a furnace burning secretly
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
Who ministered with human charity
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of wind

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With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In his career. The infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream
Of after-times: but youthful maidens, taught
By nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false names
Brother and friend; would fress his palid hand
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path
Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasmian shore
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes—a strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea shore. A swan was there
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approached, and, with strong wings
Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight.—"Thou hast a home,
Beautiful bird! thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I, that I should linger here
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts?" A gloomy smile
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly

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Its precious charge, and silent death exposed,
Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure,
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts, he looked around.
There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
A little shallop floating near the shore
Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.
It had been long abandoned, for its sides
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints
Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
A restless impulse urged him to embark,
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste;
For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny, sea and sky
Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
Following his eager soul, the wanderer
Leaped in the boat; he spread his cloak aloft
On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea
Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.

As one that in a silver vision floats
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
The straining boat.—A whirlwind swept it on,
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
Through the white ridges of the chafed sea.
The waves arose. Higher and higher still

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Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's scourge
Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.
Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
Of wave running on wave, and blast on blast
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
With dark obliterating course, he sate:
As if their genii were the ministers
Appointed to conduct him to the light
Of those beloved eyes, the Poet sate
Holding the steady helm. Evening came on;
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray
That canopied his path o'er the waste deep;
Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
Entwined in duskier wreaths her braided locks
O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of day;
Night followed, clad with stars. On every side
More horribly the multitudinous streams
Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
Still fled before the storm; still fled, like foam
Down the steep cataract of a wintry river;
Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave;
Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
That fell, convulsing ocean. Safely fled—
As if that frail and wasted human form
Had been an elemental god.

At midnight
The moon arose: and lo! the ethereal cliffs
Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
Among the stars like sunlight, and around
Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves

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Bursting and eddying irresistibly
Rage and resound for ever —Who shall save?
The boat fled on,—the boiling torrent drove,—
The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
The shattered mountain overhung the sea,
And faster still, beyond all human speed,
Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
The little boat was driven. A cavern there
Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
Ingulphed the rushing sea. The boat fled on
With unrelaxing speed. "Vision and Love!"
The Poet cried aloud, "I have beheld
The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
Shall not divide us long."

The boat pursued
The windings of the cavern.—Day-light shone
At length upon that gloomy river's flow;
Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain riven
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm;
Stair above stair the eddying waters rose,
Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
With alternating dash the gnarled roots
Of mighty trees, that stretched their giant arms
In darkness over it. I' the midst was left,
Reflecting, yet distorting every cloud,
A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,

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With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
Till on the verge of the extremest curve,
Where, through an opening of the rocky bank,
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
Of glassy quiet mid those battling tides
Is left, the boat paused, shuddering. Shall it sink
Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress
Of that resistless gulph embosom it?
Now shall it fall? A wandering stream of wind,
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail,
And, lo! with gentle motion between banks
Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,
Beneath a woven grove, it sails, and, hark!
The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar
With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.
Where the embowering trees recede, and leave
A little space of green expanse, the cove
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes,
Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave
Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
Which nought but vagrant bird, or wanton wind,
Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay,
Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed
To deck with their bright hues his withered hair,
But on his heart its solitude returned,
And he forebore. Not the strong impulse hid
In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame,
Had yet performed its ministry: it hung
Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
Of night close over it.

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The noonday sun
Now shone upon the forest one vast mass
Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
Scooped in the dark base of those aery rocks
Mocking its moans, respond and roar for ever.
The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as led
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt some bank,
Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark
And dark the shades accumulate—the oak,
Expanding its immeasurable arms,
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
Of the tall cedar, overarching, frame
Most solemn domes within, and far below,
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang
Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, cloathed
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
The grey trunks; and, as gamesome infant's eyes,
With gentle meanings and most innocent wiles,
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs,
Uniting their close union; the woven leaves
Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen
Sends from its woods of musk-rose, twined with jasmine,
A soul-dissolving odour, to invite

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To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,
Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep
Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades
Like vapourous shapes half seen: beyond a well,
Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
Images all the woven boughs above,
And each depending leaf, and every speck
Of azure sky, darting between their chasms;
Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
Its portraiture, but some inconstant star
Between one foliaged lattice twinkling fair,
Or painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon,
Or gorgeous insect, floating motionless,
Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings
Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
Their own wan light through the reflected lines
Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
Of that still fountain; as the human heart,
Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
The motion of the leaves, the grass that sprung
Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel
An unaccustomed presence, and the sound
Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed
To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes
Of shadowy silver or enshining light,
Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
Of grace, or majesty, or mystery,—
But undulating woods, and silent well,
And rippling rivulet, and evening gloom
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming
Held commune with him, as if he and it

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Were all that was,—only....when his regard
Was raised by intense pensiveness....two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.

Obedient to the light
That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
The windings of the dell.—The rivulet,
Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell
Among the moss with hollow harmony,
Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
It danced, like childhood laughing at it went;
Then through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
That overhung its quietness.—"O stream!
Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
Whither do thy mysterious waters tend?
Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulphs,
Thy searchless fountain, and invisible course,
Have each their type in me: And the wide sky
And measureless ocean may declare as soon
What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud
Contains thy waters, as the universe
Tell where these living thoughts reside, when stretched
Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste
I' the passing wind!"

Beside the grassy shore
Of the small stream he went; he did impress
On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught
Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one

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Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
Of fever he did move; yet, not like him,
Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame
Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
He must descend. With rapid steps he went
Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
Of the wild babbling rivulet; and now
The forest's solemn canopies were changed
For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.
Grey rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed
The struggling brook: tall spires of windlestrae
Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,
And nought but gnarled roots of ancient pines,
Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here,
Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,
The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
And white; and where irradiate dewy eyes
Had shone, gleam stony orbs: so from his steps
Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds
And musical motions. Calm, he still pursued
The stream, that with a larger volume now
Rolled through the labyrinthine dell; and there
Fretted a path through its descending curves
With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and its precipice,
Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
'Mid toppling stones, black gulphs, and yawning caves,
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream. Lo! where the pass expands
Its strong jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks

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And seems, with its accumulated crags,
To overhang the world: for wide expand
Beneath the wan stars and descending moon
Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
Dim tracts and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
Of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills
Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge
Of the remote horizon. The near scene,
In naked and severe simplicity,
Made contrast with the universe. A pine,
Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
Yielding one only response at each pause,
In most familar cadence, with the howl
The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river,
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
Fell into that immeasurable void,
Scattering its waters to the passing winds.

Yet the gray precipice, and solemn pine,
And torrent, were not all;—one silent nook
Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,
Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
It overlooked in its serenity
The dark earth, and the bending vault of stars.
It was a tranquil spot, that seemed to smile
Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped
The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
And did embower with leaves for ever green,
And berries dark, the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor; and here
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore,
In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose decay,
Red, yellow, or ethereally pale,

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Rival the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt
Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
One human step alone, has ever broken
The stillness of its solitude:—one voice
Alone inspired its echoes;—even that voice
Which hither came, floating among the winds,
And led the loveliest among human forms
To make their wild haunts the depository
Of all the grace and beauty that endued
Its motions, render up its majesty,
Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
Commit the colours of that varying cheek,
That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

The dim and horned moon hung low, and poured
A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist
Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank
Wan moonlight even to fulness: not a star
Shone, not a sound was heard; the very winds,
Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
Slept, clasped in his embrace.—O storm of death!
Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night:
And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still
Guiding its irresistible career
In thy devastating omnipotence,
Art king of this frail world, from the red field
Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,
The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
Of innocence, the scaffold, and the throne,
A mighty voice invokes thee. Ruin calls

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His brother Death. A rare and regal prey
He hath prepared, prowling around the world;
Glutted with which thou mayst repose, and men
Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,
Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess
The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death
Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
Did he resign his high and holy soul
To images of the majestic past,
That paused within his passive being now,
Like winds that bear sweet music, when they breathe
Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place
His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
Of the old pine. Upon an ivied stone
Reclined his languid head; his limbs did rest,
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
Of that obscurest chasm;—and thus he lay,
Surrendering to their final impulses
The hovering powers of life. Hope and Despair,
The torturers, slept; no mortal pain or fear
Marred his repose, the influxes of sense,
And his own being unalloyed by pain,
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
At peace, and faintly smiling:—his last sight
Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed
To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
It rests, and still as the divided frame
Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,

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That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still:
And when two lessening points of light alone
Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp
Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
The stagnate night:—till the minutest ray
Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
It paused—it fluttered. But when heaven remained
Utterly black, the murky shades involved
An image, silent, cold, and motionless,
As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
Even as a vapour fed with golden beams
That ministered on sunlight, ere the west
Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame—
No sense, no motion, no divinity—
A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream
Once fed with many-voiced waves—a dream
Of youth, which night and time have quenched for ever,
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.

Oh, for Medea's wondrous alchymy,
Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! Oh, that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
Which but one living man has drained, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
No proud exemption in the blighting curse
He bears, over the world wanders for ever,
Lone as incarnate death! Oh, that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power, even when his feeble hand

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Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world! But thou art fled
Like some frail exhalation, which the dawn
Robes in its golden beams,—ah! thou hast fled!
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius. Heartless things
Are done and said i'the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice:—but thou art fled—
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
Now thou art not. Upon those pallid lips
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes
That image sleep in death, upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone
In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
Let not high verse, mourning the memory
Of that which is no more, or painting's woe
Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
And all the shows o'the world are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their light to shade.
It is a woe too 'deep for tears,' when all
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, nor sobs nor groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;

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But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

THE SENSITIVE PLANT.

PART FIRST.

A Sensitive Plant in a garden grew,
And the young winds fed it with silver dew,
And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light,
And closed them beneath the kisses of night.

And the Spring arose on the garden fair,
Like the Spirit of Love felt every where;
And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.

But none ever trembled and panted with bliss
In the garden, the field, or the wilderness.
Like a doe in the noontide with love's sweet want,
As the companionless Sensitive Plant.

The snow-drop, and then the violet,
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,
And their breath was mixed with fresh odour, sent
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,

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Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,
Till they die of their own dear loveliness;

And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale,
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen
Through their pavilions of tender green;

And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue,
Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew
Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,
It was felt like an odour within the sense;

And the rose like a nymph to the bath addrest,
Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast,
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare;

And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,
As a Mænad, its moonlight-coloured cup,
Till the fiery star, which is its eye,
Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky;

And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberose,
The sweetest flower for scent that blows;
And all rare blossoms from every clime
Grew in that garden in perfect prime.

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom
Was prankt under boughs of embowering blossom,
With golden and green light, slanting through
Their heaven of many a tangled hue.

Broad water lilies lay tremulously,
And starry river-buds glimmered by,

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And around them the soft stream did glide and dance
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.

And the sinuous paths of lawn and of moss,
Which led through the garden along and across,
Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,
Some lost among bowers of blossoming trees,

Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells
As fair as the fabulous asphodels,
And flowrets which drooping as day drooped too
Fell into pavilions, white, purple, and blue,
To roof the glow-worm from the evening dew.

And from this undefiled Paradise
The flowers (as an infant's awakening eyes
Smile on its mother, whose singing sweet
Can first lull, and at last must awaken it,)

When Heaven's blithe winds had unfolded them,
As mine-lamps enkindle a hidden gem,
Shone smiling to Heaven, and every one
Shared joy in the light of the gentle sun;

For each one was interpenetrated
With the light and the odour its neighbour shed,
Like young lovers whom youth and love make dear
Wrapped and filled by their mutual atmosphere.

But the Sensitive Plant which could give small fruit
Of the love which it felt from the leaf to the root,
Received more than all, it loved more than ever,
Where none wanted but it, could belong to the giver,

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For the Sensitive Plant has no bright flower.
Radiance and odour are not its dower;
It loves, even like Love, its deep heart is full,
It desires what it has not, the beautiful!

The light winds which from unsustaining wings
Shed the music of many murmurings;
The beams which dart from many a star
Of the flowers whose hues they bear afar;

The plumed insects swift and free,
Like golden boats on a sunny sea,
Laden with light and odour, which pass
Over the gleam of the living grass;

The unseen clouds of the dew, which lie
Like fire in the flowers till the sun rides high,
Then wander like spirits among the spheres,
Each cloud faint with the fragrance it bears;

The quivering vapours of dim noontide,
Which like a sea o'er the warm earth glide,
In which every sound, and odour, and beam,
Move as reeds in a single stream;

Each and all like ministering angels were
For the Sensitive Plant sweet joy to bear,
Whilst the lagging hours of the day went by
Like windless clouds o'er a tender sky.

And when evening descended from heaven above,
And the earth was all rest, and the air was all love,
And delight, tho' less bright, was far more deep,
And the day's veil fell from the world of sleep,

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And the beasts, and the birds, and the insects were drowned
In an ocean of dreams without a sound;
Whose waves never mark, tho' they ever impress
The light sand which paves it, consciousness;

(Only over head the sweet nightingale
Ever sang more sweet as the day might fail,
And snatches of its Elysian chant
Were mixed with the dreams of the Sensitive Plant.)

The Sensitive Plant was the earliest
Up-gathered into the bosom of rest;
A sweet child weary of its delight,
The feeblest and yet the favourite,
Cradled within the embrace of night.

PART SECOND.

There was a power in this sweet place,
An Eve in this Eden; a ruling grace
Which to the flowers did they waken or dream
Was as God is to the starry scheme.

A Lady, the wonder of her kind,
Whose form was upborne by a lovely mind,
Which, dilating, had moulded her mien and motion
Like a sea-flower unfolded beneath the ocean,

Tended the garden from morn to even:
And the meteors of that sublunar heaven,
Like the lamps of the air when night walks forth,
Laughed round her footsteps up from the Earth!

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She had no companion of mortal race,
But her tremulous breath and her flushing face
Told, whilst the moon kissed the sleep from her eyes,
That her dreams were less slumber than Paradise:

As if some bright Spirit for her sweet sake
Had deserted heaven while the stars were awake,
As if yet around her he lingering were,
Tho' the veil of daylight concealed him from her.

Her step seemed to pity the grass it prest;
You might hear by the heaving of her breast,
That the coming and going of the wind
Brought pleasure there and left passion behind.

And wherever her airy footstep trod,
Her trailing hair from the grassy sod
Erased its light vestige, with shadowy sweep,
Like a sunny storm o'er the dark green deep.

I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet;
I doubt not they felt the spirit that came
From her glowing fingers thro' all their frame.

She sprinkled bright water from the stream
On those that were faint with the sunny beam;
And out of the cups of the heavy flowers
She emptied the rain of the thunder showers.

She lifted their heads with her tender hands,
And sustained them with rods and ozier bands;
If the flowers had been her own infants she
Could never have nursed them more tenderly.

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And all killing insects and gnawing worms,
And things of obscene and unlovely forms,
She bore in a basket of Indian woof,
Into the rough woods far aloof,

In a basket of grasses and wild flowers full,
The freshest her gentle hands could pull
For the poor banished insects, whose intent,
Although they did ill, was innocent.

But the bee and the beamlike ephemeris,
Whose path is the lightning's, and soft moths that kiss
The sweet lips of the flowers, and harm not, did she
Make her attendant angels be.

And many an antenatal tomb,
Where butterflies dream of the life to come,
She left clinging round the smooth and dark
Edge of the odorous cedar bark.

This fairest creature from earliest spring
Thus moved through the garden, ministering
All the sweet season of summer tide,
And ere the first leaf looked brown—she died.

PART THIRD.

Three days the flowers of the garden fair
Like stars, when the moon is awakened, were,
Or the waves of Baiæ, ere luminous
She floats up through the smoke of Vesuvius.

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And on the fourth, the Sensitive Plant
Felt the sound of the funeral chant,
And the steps of the bearers, heavy and slow,
And the sobs of the mourners deep and low;

The weary sound and heavy breath,
And the silent motions of passing death,
And the smell, cold, oppressive, and dank,
Sent through the pores of the coffin plank;

The dark grass, and flowers among the grass,
Were bright with tears as the crowd did pass;
From their sighs the wind caught a mournful tone,
And sate in the pines, and gave groan for groan.

The garden, once fair, became cold and foul,
Like the corpse of her who had been its soul,
Which at first was lively as if in sleep,
Then slowly changed, till it grew a heap
To make men tremble who never weep.

Swift summer into the autumn flowed,
And frost in the mist of the morning rode,
Though the noonday sun looked clear and bright,
Mocking the spoil of the secret night.

The rose leaves, like flakes of crimson now,
Paved the turf and the moss below.
The lilies were drooping, and white, and wan,
Like the head and the skin of a dying man.

And Indian plants, of scents and hue
The sweetest that ever were fed on dew

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Leaf after leaf, day after day,
Were massed into the common clay.

And the leaves, brown, yellow, and grey, and red,
And white with the whiteness of what is dead,
Like troops of ghosts on the dry wind past;
Their whistling noise made the birds aghast.

And the gusty winds waked the winged seeds
Out of their birthplace of ugly weeds,
Till they clung round many a sweet flower's stem,
Which rotted into the earth with them.

The water-blooms under the rivulet
Fell from the stalks on which they were set;
And the eddies drove them here and there,
As the winds did those of the upper air.

Then the rain came down, and the broken stalks
Were bent and tangled across the walks;
And the leafless net-work of parasite bowers
Massed into ruin; and all sweet flowers.

Between the time of the wind and the snow,
All loathliest weeds began to grow,
Whose coarse leaves were splashed with many a speck
Like the water-snake's belly and the toad's back.

And thistles, and nettles, and darnels rank,
And the dock, and henbane, and hemlock dank,
Stretched out its long and hollow shank,
And stifled the air till the dead wind stank.

And plants, at whose names the verse feels loath,
Filled the place with a monstrous undergrowth,

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Prickly, and pulpous, and blistering, and blue,
Livid, and starred with a lurid dew.

And agarics and fungi, with mildew and mould,
Started like mist from the wet ground cold;
Pale, fleshy, as if the decaying dead
With a spirit of growth had been animated!

Their moss rotted off them, flake by flake,
Till the thick stalk stuck like a murderer's stake,
Where rags of loose flesh yet tremble on high,
Infecting the winds that wander by.

Spawn, weeds, and filth, a leprous scum,
Made the running rivulet thick and dumb,
And at its outlet flags huge as stakes
Dammed it up with roots knotted like water snakes.

And hour by hour, when the air was still,
The vapours arose which have strength to kill:
At morn they were seen, at noon they were felt,
At night they were darkness no star could melt.

And the unctuous meteors from spray to spray
Crept and flitted in broad noon-day
Unseen; every branch on which they alit
By a venomous blight was burned and bit.

The Sensitive Plant like one forbid
Wept, and the tears within each lid
Of its folded leaves which together grew
Were changed to a blight of frozen glue.

For the leaves soon fell, and the branches soon
By the heavy axe of the blast were hewn;

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The sap shrank to the root through every pore
As the blood to a heart that will beat no more.

For Winter came; the wind was his whip:
One choppy finger was on his lip:
He had torn the cataracts from the hills,
And they clanked at his girdle like manacles;

His breath was a chain which without a sound
The earth, and the air, and the water bound;
He came, fiercely driven, in his chariot-throne
By the tenfold blasts of the arctic zone.

Then the weeds which were forms of living death
Fled from the frost to the earth beneath.
Their decay and sudden flight from the frost
Was but like the vanishing of a ghost!

And under the roots of the Sensitive Plant
The moles and the dormice died for want:
The birds dropped stiff from the frozen air,
And were caught in the branches naked and bare.

First there came down a thawing rain,
And its dull drops froze on the boughs again,
Then there steamed up a freezing dew,
Which to the drops of the thaw-rain grew;

And a northern whirlwind, wandering about
Like a wolf that had smelt a dead child out,
Shook the boughs thus laden, and heavy and stiff,
And snapped them off with his rigid griff.

When winter had gone and spring came back,
The Sensitive Plant was a leafless wreck;

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But the mandrakes, and toadstools, and docks, and darnels,
Rose like the dead from their ruined charnels.

CONCLUSION.

Whether the Sensitive Plant, or that
Which within its boughs like a spirit sat
Ere its outward form had known decay,
Now felt this change, I cannot say.

Whether that lady's gentle mind,
No longer with the form combined
Which scattered love, as stars do light,
Found sadness, where it left delight,

I dare not guess; but in this life
Of error, ignorance, and strife,
Where nothing is, but all things seem,
And we the shadows of the dream,

It is a modest creed, and yet
Pleasant if one considers it,
To own that death itself must be,
Like all the rest, a mockery.

That garden sweet, that lady fair,
And all sweet shapes and odours there,
In truth have never pass'd away:
'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed; not they.

For love, and beauty, and delight,
There is no death nor change: their might
Exceeds our organs, which endure
No light, being themselves obscure.

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TRANSLATIONS.

HYMN TO MERCURY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK OF HOMER.

SING, Muse, the son of Maia and of Jove,
The Herald-child, king of Arcadia
And all its pastoral hills, whom in sweet love
Having been interwoven, modest May
Bore Heavens's dread Supreme—an antique grove
Shadowed the cavern where the lovers lay
In the deep night, unseen by Gods or Men,
And white-armed Juno slumbered sweetly then.

Now, when the joy of Jove had its fulfilling,
And Heaven's tenth moon chronicled her relief,
She gave to light a babe all babes excelling,
A schemer subtle beyond all belief;
A shepherd of thin dreams, a cow-stealing,
A night-watching, and door-waylaying thief,
Who 'mongst the Gods was soon about to thieve,
And other glorious actions to achieve.

The babe was born at the first peep of day;
He began playing on the lyre at noon,
And the same evening did he steal away
Apollo's herds;—the fourth day of the moon

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On which him bore the venerable May,
From her immortal limbs he leaped full soon,
Nor long could in the sacred cradle keep,
But out to seek Apollo's herds would creep.

Out of the lofty cavern wandering
He found a tortoise, and cried out—"A treasure!"
(For Mercury first made the tortoise sing)
The beast before the portal at his leisure
The flowery herbage was depasturing,
Moving his feet in a deliberate measure
Over the turf. Jove's profitable son
Eyeing him laughed, and laughing thus begun:—

"A useful god-send are you to me now,
King of the dance, companion of the feast,
Lovely in all your nature! Welcome, you
Excellent plaything! Where, sweet mountain beast,
Got you that speckled shell? Thus much I know,
You must come home with me and be my guest;
You will give joy to me, and I will do
All that is in my power to honour you.

"Better to be at home than out of door;
So come with me, and though it has been said
That you alive defend from magic power,
I know you will sing sweetly when you're dead."
Thus having spoken, the quaint infant bore,
Lifting it from the grass on which it fed,
And grasping it in his delighted hold,
His treasured prize into the cavern old.

Then scooping with a chisel of grey steel,
He bored the life and soul out of the beast—

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Not swifter a swift thought of woe or weal
Darts through the tumult of a human breast
Which thronging cares annoy—not swifter whea
The flashes of its torture and unrest
Out of the dizzy eyes—than Maia's son
All that he did devise hath featly done.

And through the tortoise's hard strong skin
At proper distances small holes he made,
And fastened the cut stems of reeds within,
And with a piece of leather overlaid
The open space and fixed the cubits in,
Fitting the bridge to both, and stretched o'er al
Symphonious cords of sheep gut rhythmical.

When he had wrought the lovely instrument,
He tried the chords, and made division meet
Preluding with the plectrum, and there went
Up from beneath his hand a tumult sweet
Of mighty sounds, and from his lips he sent
A strain of unpremeditated wit
Joyous and wild and wanton—such you may
Hear among revellers on a holiday.

He sung how Jove and May of the bright sandal
Dallied in love not quite legitimate;
And his own birth, still scoffing at the scandal,
And naming his own name, did celebrate;
His mother's cave and servant maids he planned
In plastic verse, her household stuff and state,
Perennial pot, trippet, and brazen pan—
But singing he conceived another plan.

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Seized with a sudden fancy for fresh meat,
He in his sacred crib deposited
The hollow lyre, and from the cavern sweet
Rushed with great leaps up to the mountain's head,
Revolving in his mind some subtle feat
Of thievish craft, such as a swindler might
Devise in the lone season of dun night.

Lo! the great Sun under the ocean's bed has
Driven steeds and chariot—the child meanwhile strode
O'er the Pierian mountains clothed in shadows,
Where the immortal oxen of the God
Are pastured in the flowering unmown meadows,
And safely stalled in a remote abode—
The archer Argicide, elate and proud,
Drove fifty from the herd, lowing aloud.

He drove them wandering o'er the sandy way,
But, being ever mindful of his craft,
Backward and forward drove he them astray,
So that the tracks, which seemed before, were aft;
His sandals then he threw to the ocean spray,
And for each foot he wrought a kind of raft
Of tamarisk, and tamarisk-like sprigs,
And bound them in a lump with withy twigs.

And on his feet he tied these sandals light,
The trail of whose wide leaves might not betray
His track; and then, a self-sufficing wight,
Like a man hastening on some distant way,
He from Piera's mountain bent his flight;
But an old man perceived the infant pass
Down green Onchestus, heaped like beds with grass.

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The old man stood dressing his sunny vine:
"Halloo! old fellow with the crooked shoulder!
You grub those stumps? Before they will bear w
Methinks even you must grow a little older:
Attend, I pray, to this advice of mine,
As you would 'scape what might appal a bolder—
Seeing, see not—and hearing, hear not—and—
If you have understanding—understand."

So saying, Hermes rouzed the oxen vast;
O'er shadowy mountain and resounding dell,
And flower-paven plains, great Hermes past;
Till the black night divine, which favouring fell
Around his steps, grew grey, and morning fast
Wakened the world to work, and from her cell,
Sea-strewn, the Pallantean Moon sublime
Into her watch-tower just began to climb.

Now to Alpheus he had driven all
The broad-foreheaded oxen of the Sun;
They came unwearied to the lofty stall
And to the water troughs which ever run
Through the fresh fields—and when with rushgras
Lotus and all sweet herbage, every one
Had pastured been, the great God made them mo
Towards the stall in a collected drove.

A mighty pile of wood the God then heaped,
And having soon conceived the mystery
Of fire, from two smooth laurel branches stript
The bark, and rubbed them in his palms,—on hig
Suddenly forth the burning vapour leapt,
And the divine child saw delightedly—

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Mercury first found out for human weal
Tinder-box, matches, fire-irons, flint, and steel.

And fine dry logs and roots innumerous
He gathered in a delve upon the ground—
And kindled them—and instantaneous
The strength of the fierce flame was breathed around:
And whilst the might of glorious Vulcan thus
Wrapt the great pile with glare and roaring sound,
Hermes dragged forth two heifers, lowing loud,
Close to the fire—such might was in the God.

And on the earth upon their backs he threw
The panting beasts, and rolled them o'er and o'er,
And bored their lives out. Without more ado
He cut up fat and flesh, and down before
The fire on spits of wood he placed the two,
Toasting their flesh and ribs, and all the gore
Pursed in the bowels; and while this was done
He stretched their hides over a craggy stone.

We mortals let an ox grow old, and then
Cut it up after long consideration—
But joyous-minded Hermes from the glen
Drew the fat spoils to the more open station
Of a flat smooth space, and portioned them; and when
He had by lot assigned to each a ration
Of the twelve Gods, his mind became aware
Of all the joys which in religion are.

For the sweet savour of the roasted meat
Tempted him though immortal. Nathelesse
He checked his haughty will, and did not eat,
Though what it cost him words can scarce express,

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And every wish, to put such morsels sweet
Down his most sacred throat, he did repress;
But soon within the lofty portalled stall
He placed the fat and flesh and bones and all.

And every trace of the fresh butchery
And cooking, the God soon made disappear,
As if it all had vanished through the sky;
He burned the hoofs and horns and head and hair,—
The insatiate fire devoured them hungrily;—
And when he saw that every thing was clear,
He quenched the coals and trampled the black dust,
And in the stream his bloody sandals tossed.

All night he worked in the serene moonshine—
But when the light of day was spread abroad
He sought his natal mountain peaks divine.
On his long wandering, neither man nor god
Had met him, since he killed Apollo's kine,
Nor house-dog had barked at him on his road;
Now he obliquely through the key-hole pass'd,
Like a thin mist, or an autumnal blast.

Right through the temple of the spacious cave
He went with soft light feet—as if his tread
Fell not on earth; no sound their falling gave;
Then to his cradle he crept quick, and spread
The swaddling-cloathes about him; and the knave
Lay playing with the covering of the bed
With his left hand about his knees—the right
Held his beloved tortoise-lyre tight.

There he lay innocent as a new born child,
As gossips say; but, though he was a god,

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The goddess, his fair mother, unbeguiled
Knew all that he had done, being abroad;
"Whence come you, and from what adventure wild,
You cunning rogue, and where have you abode
All the long night, clothed in your impudence?
What have you done since you departed hence?

"Apollo soon will pass within this gate,
And bind your tender body in a chain
In extricably tight, and fast as fate,
Unless you can delude the God again,
Even when within his arms—ah, runagate!
A pretty torment both for gods and men
Your father made when he made you!"—"Dear mother,"
Replied sly Hermes, "wherefore scold and bother?

"As if I were like other babes as old,
And understood nothing of what is what;
And cared at all to hear my mother scold.
I in my subtle brain a scheme have got,
Which, whilst the sacred stars round Heaven are rolled,
Will profit you and me—nor shall our lot
Be as you counsel, without gifts or food,
To spend our lives in this obscure abode.

"But we will leave this shadow-peopled cave,
And live among the Gods, and pass each day
In high communion, sharing what they have
Of profuse wealth and unexhausted prey;
And, from the portion which my father gave
To Phœbus, I will snatch my share away,
Which if my father will not—natheless I,
Who am the king of robbers, can but try.

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"And, if Latona's son should find me out,
I'll countermine him by a deeper plan;
I'll pierce the Pythian temple-walls, though stout,
And sack the fane of every thing I can—
Cauldrons and tripods of great worth no doubt,
Each golden cup and polished brazen pan,
All the wrought tapestries and garments gay."—
So they together talked;—meanwhile the Day

Æthereal born arose out of the flood
Of flowing Ocean, bearing light to men.
Apollo past toward the sacred wood,
Which from the inmost depths of its green glen
Echoes the voice of Neptune,—and there stood
On the same spot in green Onchestus then
That same old animal, the vine dresser,
Who was employed hedging his vineyard there.

Latona's glorious Son began:—"I pray
Tell, ancient hedger of Onchestus green,
Whether a drove of kine has past this way,
All heifers with crooked horns? for they have been
Stolen from the herd in high Pieria,
Where a black bull was fed apart, between
Two woody mountains in a neighbouring glen,
And four fierce dogs watched there, unanimous as men.

"And, what is strange, the author of this theft
Has stolen the fatted heifers every one,
But the four dogs and the black bull are left:—
Stolen they were last night at set of sun,
Of their soft beds and their sweet food bereft—
Now tell me, man born ere the world begun,

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Have you seen any one pass with the cows?"—
To whom the man of overhanging brows:

"My friend, it would require no common skill
Justly to speak of every thing I see:
On various purposes of good or ill
Many pass by my vineyard,—and to me
'Tis difficult to know the invisible
Thoughts which in all those many minds may be:—
Thus much alone I certainly can say,
I tilled these vines till the decline of day,

"And then I thought I saw, but dare not speak
With certainty of such a wondrous thing,
A child, who could not have been born a week,
Those fair-horned cattle closely following,
And in his hand he held a polished stick:
And, as on purpose, he walked wavering
From one side to the other of the road,
And with his face opposed the steps he trod."

Apollo, hearing this, past quickly on—
No winged omen could have shown more clear
That the deceiver was his father's son.
So the God wraps a purple atmosphere
Around his shoulders, and like fire is gone
To famous Pylos, seeking his kine there,
And found their track and his, yet hardly cold,
And cried—"What wonder do mine eyes behold!

"Here are the footsteps of the horned herd
Turned back towards their fields of asphodel;—
But these! are not the tracks of beast or bird,

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Grey wolf, or bear, or lion of the dell,
Or maned Centaur—sand was never stirred
By man or woman thus! Inexplicable!
Who with unwearied feet could e'er impress
The sand with such enormous vestiges?

"That was most strange—but this is stranger still!"
Thus having said, Phœbus impetuously
Sought high Cyllene's forest-cinctured hill,
And the deep cavern were dark shadows lie,
And where the ambrosial nymph with happy will
Bore the Saturnian's love-child, Mercury—
And a delightful odour from the dew
Of the hill pastures, at his coming, flew.

And Phœbus stooped under the craggy roof
Arched over the dark cavern:—Maia's child
Perceived that he came angry, far aloof,
About the cows of which he had been beguiled,
And over him the fine and fragrant woof
Of his ambrosial swaddling clothes he piled—
As among fire-brands lies a burning spark
Covered, beneath the ashes cold and dark.

There, like an infant who had sucked his fill,
And now was newly washed and put to bed,
Awake, but courting sleep with weary will,
And gathered in a lump hands, feet, and head,
He lay, and his beloved tortoise still
He grasped and held under his shoulder-blade.
Phœbus, the lovely mountain-goddess, knew,
Not less her subtle swindling baby, who

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Lay swathed in his sly wiles. Round every crook
Of the ample cavern, for his kine Apollo
Looked sharp; and when he saw them not, he took
The glittering key, and opened three great hollow
Recesses in the rock—where many a nook
Was filled with the sweet food immortals swallow,
And mighty heaps of silver and of gold
Were piled within—a wonder to behold!

And white and silver robes, all overwrought
With cunning workmanship of tracery sweet—
Except among the Gods there can be nought
In the wide world to be compared with it.
Latona's offspring, after having sought
His herds in every corner, thus did greet
Great Hermes:—"Little cradled rogue, declare,
Of my illustrious heifers, where they are!

"Speak quickly! or a quarrel between us
Must rise, and the event will be, that I
Shall haul you into dismal Tartarus,
In fiery gloom to dwell eternally;
Nor shall your father nor your mother loose
The bars of that black dungeon—utterly
You shall be cast out from the light of day,
To rule the ghosts of men, unblest as they."

To whom thus Hermes slily answered:—"Son
Of great Latona, what a speech is this!
Why come you here to ask me what is done
With the wild oxen which it seems you miss?
I have not seen them, nor from any one
Have heard a word of the whole business;

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If you should promise an immense reward,
I could not tell more than you now have heard.

" An ox-stealer should be both tall and strong,
And I am but a little new-born thing,
Who, yet at least, can think of nothing wrong:—
My business is to suck, and sleep, and fling
The cradle-clothes about me all day long,—
Or, half asleep, hear my sweet mother sing,
And to be washed in water clean and warm,
And hushed and kissed and kept secure from harm.

" Oh, let not e'er this quarrel be averred!
The astounded Gods would laugh at you, if e'er
You should allege a story so absurd,
As that a new-born infant forth could fare
Out of his home after a savage herd.
I was born yesterday—my small feet are
Too tender for the roads so hard and rough:—
And if you think that this is not enough,

" I swear a great oath, by my father's head,
That I stole not your cows, and that I know
Of no one else who might, or could, or did.—
Whatever things cows are I do not know,
For I have only heard the name."—This said,
He winked as fast as could be, and his brow
Was wrinkled, and a whistle loud gave he,
Like one who hears some strange absurdity.

Apollo gently smiled and said:—" Aye, aye,—
You cunning little rascal, you will bore
Many a rich man's house, and your array
Of thieves will lay their siege before his door,

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Silent as night, in night; and many a day
In the wild glens rough shepherds will deplore
That you or yours, having an appetite,
Met with their cattle, comrade of the night!

"And this among the Gods shall be your gift,
To be considered as the lord of those
Who swindle, house-break, sheep-steal, and shop-lift;—
But now if you would not your last sleep dose,
Crawl out!"—Thus saying, Phœbus did uplift
The subtle infant in his swaddling clothes,
And in his arms, according to his wont,
A scheme devised the illustrious Argiphont.

* * * * *
* * * *

And sneezed and shuddered—Phœbus on the grass
Him threw, and whilst all that he had designed
He did perform—eager although to pass,
Apollo darted from his mighty mind
Towards the subtle babe the following scoff:—
"Do not imagine this will get you off,

"You little swaddled child of Jove and May!"
And seized him:—"By this omen I shall trace
My noble herds, and you shall lead the way."—
Cyllenian Hermes from the grassy place,
Like one in earnest haste to get away,
Rose, and with hands lifted towards his face
Roused both his ears—up from his shoulders drew
His swaddling clothes, and—"What mean you to do

"With me, you unkind God?—said Mercury:
"Is it about these cows you teaze me so?

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I wish the race of cows were perished!—I
Stole not your cows—I do not even know
What things cows are. Alas! I well may sigh,
That, since I came into this world of woe,
I should have ever heard the name of one—
But I appeal to the Saturnian's throne."

Thus Phœbus and the vagrant Mercury
Talked without coming to an explanation,
With adverse purpose. As for Phœbus, he
Sought not revenge, but only information,
And Hermes tried with lies and roguery
To cheat Apollo.—But when no evasion
Served—for the cunning one his match had found—
He paced on first over the sandy ground.

He of the Silver Bow the child of Jove
Followed behind, till to their heavenly Sire
Came both his children—beautiful as Love,
And from his equal balance did require
A judgement in the cause wherein they strove.
O'er odorous Olympus and its snows
A murmuring tumult as they came arose,—

And from the folded depths of the great Hill,
While Hermes and Apollo reverent stood
Before Jove's throne, the indestructible
Immortals rushed in mighty multitude;
And, whilst their seats in order due they fill,
The lofty Thunderer in a careless mood
To Phœbus said:—"Whence drive you this sweet prey,
This herald-baby, born but yesterday?—

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"A most important subject, triffer, this
To lay before the Gods!"—"Nay, father, nay,
When you have understood the business,
Say not that I a'one am fond of prey.
I found this little boy in a recess
Under Cyllene's mountains far away—
A manifest and most apparent thief,
A scandal-monger beyond all belief.

"I never saw his like either in heaven
Or upon earth for knavery or craft:—
Out of the field my cattle yester-even,
By the low shore on which the loud sea laughed,
He right down to the river-ford had driven;
And mere astonishment would make you daft
To see the double kind of footsteps strange
He has impressed wherever he did range.

"The cattle's track on the black dust full well
Is evident, as if they went towards
The place from which they came—that asphodel
Meadow, in which I feed my many herds;—
His steps were most incomprehensible—
I know not how I can describe in words
Those tracks—he could have gone along the sands
Neither upon his feet nor on his hands;—

"He must have had some other stranger mode
Of moving on: those vestiges immense,
Far as I traced them on the sandy road,
Seemed like the trail of oak-toppings:—but thence
No mark nor track denoting where they trod
The hard ground gave:—but, working at his fence,

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A mortal hedger saw him as he past
To Pylos, with the cows, in fiery haste.

"I found that in the dark he quietly
Had sacrificed some cows, and before light
Had thrown the ashes all dispersedly
About the road—then, still as gloomy night,
Had crept into his cradle, either eye
Rubbing, and cogitating some new sleight.
No eagle could have seen him as he lay
Hid in his cavern from the peering day.

"I tax'd him with the fact, when he averred
Most solemnly that he did neither see
Nor even had in any manner heard
Of my lost cows, whatever things cows be;
Not could he tell, though offered a reward,
Not even who could tell of them to me."
So speaking, Phœbus sate; and Hermes then
Addressed the Supreme Lord of Gods and Men:—

"Great Father, you know clearly before hand
That all which I shall say to you is soothe;
I am a most veracious parson, and
Totally unacquainted with untruth.
At sunrise Phœbus came, but with no band
Of Gods to bear him witness, in great wrath
To my abode, seeking his heifers there,
And saying that I must show him where they are,

Or he would hurl me down the dark abyss.
I know, that every Apollonian limb
Is clothed with speed and might and manliness,
As a green bank with flowers—but unlike him

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I was born yesterday, and you may guess
He well knew this when he indulged the whim
Of bullying a poor little new-born thing
That slept, and never thought of cow-driving.

"Am I like a strong fellow who steals kine?
Believe me, dearest Father, such you are;
This driving of the herds is none of mine;
Across my threshold did I wander ne'er,
So may I thrive! I reverence the divine
Sun and the Gods, and I love you, and care
Even for this hard accuser—who must know
I am as innocent as they or you.

"I swear by these most gloriously-wrought portals—
(It is, you will allow, an oath of might)
Through which the multitude of the Immortals
Pass and repass for ever, day and night,
Devising schemes for the affairs of mortals—
That I am guiltless; and I will requite,
Although mine enemy be great and strong,
His cruel threat—do thou defend the young!"

So speaking, the Cyllenian Argiphont
Winked, as if now his adversary was fitted:—
And Jupiter, according to his wont,
Laughed heartily to hear the subtle-witted
Infant give such a plausible account,
And every word a lie. But he remitted
Judgment at present—and his exhortation
Was, to compose the affair by arbitration.

And they by mighty Jupiter were bidden
To go forth with a single purpose both,

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Neither the other chiding nor yet chidden:
And Mercury with innocence and truth
To lead the way, and show where he had hidden
The mighty heifers.—Hermes, nothing loth,
Obeyed the Ægis-bearer's will—for he
Is able to persuade all easily.

These lovely children of Heaven's highest Lord
Hastened to Pylos and the pastures wide
And lofty stalls by the Alphean ford,
Where wealth in the mute night is multiplied
With silent growth. Whilst Hermes drove the herd
Out of the stony cavern, Phœbus spied
The hides of those the little babe had slain,
Stretched on the precipice above the plain.

"How was it possible," then Phœbus said,
"That you, a little child, born yesterday,
A thing on mother's milk and kisses fed,
Could two prodigious heifers ever flay?
E'en I myself may well hereafter dread
Your prowess, offspring of Cyllenian May,
When you grow strong and tall."—He spoke, and bound
Stiff withy bands the infant's wrists around.

He might as well have bound the oxen wild;
The withy bands, though starkly interknit,
Fell at the feet of the immortal child,
Loosened by some device of his quick wit.
Phœbus perceived himself again beguiled,
And stared—while Hermes sought some hole or pit,
Looking askance and winking fast as thought,
Where he might hide himself, and not be caught.

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Sudden he changed his plan, and with strange skill
  Subdued the strong Latonian, by the might
Of winning music, to his mightier will;
  His left hand held the lyre, and in his right
The plectrum struck the chords—unconquerable
  Up from beneath his hand in circling flight
The gathering music rose—and sweet as Love
The penetrating notes did live and move

Within the heart of great Apollo—he
  Listened with all his soul, and laughed for pleasure.
Close to his side stood harping fearlessly
  The unabashed boy; and to the measure
Of the sweet lyre, there followed loud and free
  His joyous voice; for he unlocked the treasure
Of his deep song, illustrating the birth
Of the bright Gods and the dark desert Earth:

And how to the Immortals every one
  A portion was assigned of all that is;
But chief Mnemosyne did Maia's son
  Clothe in the light of his loud melodies;—
And, as each God was born or had begun,
  He in their order due and fit degrees
Sung of his birth and being—and did move
Apollo to unutterable love.

These words were winged with his swift delight:
  "You heifer-stealing schemer, well do you
Deserve that fifty oxen should requite
  Such minstrelsies as I have heard even now.
Comrade of feasts, little contriving wight,
  One of your secrets I would gladly know,
Whether the glorious power you now show forth
Was folded up within you at your birth,

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"Or whether mortal taught or God inspired
The power of unpremeditated song?
Many divinest sounds have I admired
The Olympian Gods and mortal men among;
But such a strain of wondrous, strange, untired,
And soul-awakening music, sweet and strong,
Yet did I never hear except from thee,
Offspring of May, impostor Mercury!

"What Muse, what skill, what unimagined use,
What exercise of subtlest art, has given
Thy songs such power?—for those who hear may choose
From three, the choicest of the gifts of Heaven,
Delight, and love, and sleep,—sweet sleep, whose dews
Are sweeter than the balmy tears of even:—
And I, who speak this praise, am that Apollo
Whom the Olympian Muses ever follow:

"And their delight is dance, and the blithe noise
Of song and overflowing poesy;
And sweet, even as desire, the liquid voice
Of pipes, that fills the clear air thrillingly;
But never did my inmost soul rejoice
In this dear work of youthful revelry,
As now I wonder at thee, son of Jove;
Thy harpings and thy song are soft as love.

"Now since thou hast, although so very small,
Science of arts so glorious, thus I swear,
And let this cornel javelin, keen and tall,
Witness between us what I promise here,—
That I will lead thee to the Olympian Hall,
Honoured and mighty, with thy mother dear

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And many glorious gifts in joy will give thee,
And even at the end will ne'er deceive thee."

To whom thus Mercury with prudent speech:—
"Wisely hast thou inquired of my skill:
I envy thee no thing I know to teach
Even this day:—for both in word and will
I would be gentle with thee; thou canst reach
All things in thy wise spirit, and thy sill
Is highest in heaven among the sons of Jove,
Who loves thee in the fulness of his love.

"The Counsellor Supreme has given to thee
Divinest gifts, out of the amplitude
Of his profuse exhaustless treasury;
By thee, 'tis said, the depths are understood
Of his far voice; by thee the mystery
Of all oracular fates,—and the dread mood
Of the diviner is breathed up, even I—
A child—perceive thy might and majesty—

"Thou canst seek out and compass all that wit
Can find or teach;—yet since thou wilt, come, take
The lyre—be mine the glory giving it—
Strike the sweet chords, and sing aloud, and wake
Thy joyous pleasure out of many a fit
Of tranced sound—and with fleet fingers make
Thy liquid-voiced comrade talk with thee,—
It can talk measured music eloquently.

"Then bear it boldly to the revel loud,
Love-wakening dance, or feast of solemn state,
A joy by night or day—for those endowed
With art and wisdom who interrogate

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It teaches, babbling in delightful mood,
All things which make the spirit most elate,
Soothing the mind with sweet familiar play,
Chasing the heavy shadows of dismay.

"To those who are unskilled in its sweet tongue,
Though they should question most impetuously
Its hidden soul, it gossips something wrong—
Some senseless and impertinent reply.
But thou who art as wise as thou art strong
Can compass all that thou desirest. I
Present thee with this music-flowing shell,
Knowing thou canst interrogate it well.

"And let us two henceforth together feed
On this green mountain slope and pastoral plain,
The herds in litigation—they will breed
Quickly enough to recompense our pain,
If to the bulls and cows we take good heed;—
And thou, though somewhat overfond of gain,
Grudge me not half the profit."—Having spoke,
The shell he proffered, and Apollo took;

And gave him in return the glittering lash,
Installing him as herdsman;—from the look
Of Mercury then laughed a joyous flash;
And then Apollo with the plectrum strook
The chords, and from beneath his hands a crash
Of mighty sounds rushed up, whose music shook
The soul with sweetness, as of an adept
His sweeter voice a just accordance kept.

The herd went wandering o'er the divine mead,
Whilst these most beautiful Sons of Jupiter

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Won their swift way up to the snowy head
  Of white Olympus, with the joyous lyre
Soothing their journey; and their father dread
  Gathered them both into familiar
Affection sweet,—and then, and now, and ever,
Hermes must love Him of the Golden Quiver,

To whom he gave the lyre that sweetly sounded,
  Which skilfully he held and played thereon.
He piped the while, and far and wide rebounded
  The echo of his pipings; every one
Of the Olympians sat with joy astounded,
  While he conceived another piece of fun,
One of his old tricks—which the God of Day
Perceiving, said:—"I fear thee, Son of May;—

"I fear thee and thy sly camelion spirit,
  Lest thou should steal my lyre and crooked bow;
This glory and power thou dost from Jove inherit,
  To teach all craft upon the earth below;
Thieves love and worship thee—it is thy merit
  To make all mortal business ebb and flow
By roguery:—now, Hermes, if you dare
By sacred Styx a mighty oath to swear

"That you will never rob me, you will do
  A thing extremely pleasing to my heart."
Then Mercury sware by the Stygian dew,
  That he would never steal his bow or dart,
Or lay his hands on what to him was due,
  Or ever would employ his powerful art
Against his Pythian fane. Then Phœbus swore
There was no God or man whom he loved more.

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"And I will give thee as a good-will token
The beautiful wand of wealth and happiness;
A perfect three-leaved rod of gold unbroken,
Whose magic will thy footsteps ever bless;
And whatsoever by Jove's voice is spoken
Of earthly or divine from its recess,
It like a loving soul to thee will speak,
And more than this do thou forbear to seek.

"For, dearest child, the divinations high
Which thou requirest, 'tis unlawful ever
That thou, or any other deity,
Should understand—and vain were the endeavour;
For they are hidden in Jove's mind, and I,
In trust of them, have sworn that I would never
Betray the counsels of Jove's inmost will
To any God—the oath was terrible.

"Then, golden-wanded brother, ask me not
To speak the fates by Jupiter designed;
But be it mine to tell their various lot
To the unnumbered tribes of human kind.
Let good to these and ill to these be wrought
As I dispense—but he, who comes consigned
By voice and wings of perfect augury
To my great shrine, shall find avail in me.

Him will I not deceive, but will assist;
But he who comes relying on such birds
Flatter vainly, who would strain and twist
The purpose of the Gods with idle words,
Seems their knowledge light, he shall have mist
Herd—whilst I among my other hoards

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His gifts deposit. Yet, O son of May,
I have another wondrous thing to say.

"There are three Fates, three virgin Sisters, who,
Rejoicing in their wind-outspeeding wings,
Their heads with flour snowed over white and new,
Sit in a vale round which Parnassus flings
Its circling skirts—from these I have learned true
Vaticinations of remotest things.
My father cared not. Whilst they search out dooms,
They sit apart and feed on honeycombs.

"They, having eaten the fresh honey, grow
Drunk with divine enthusiasm, and utter
With earnest willingness the truth they know;
But, if deprived of that sweet food, they mutter
All plausible delusions;—these to you
I give;—if you inquire, they will not stutter;
Delight your own soul with them:—any man
You would instruct may profit if he can.

"Take these and the fierce oxen, Maia's child—
O'er many a horse and toil-enduring mule,
O'er jagged-jawed lions, and the wild
White-tusked boars, o'er all, by field or pool,
Of cattle which the mighty Mother mild
Nourishes in her bosom, thou shalt rule—
Thou dost alone the veil of death uplift—
Thou givest not—yet this is a great gift."

Thus King Apollo loved the child of May
In truth, and Jove covered them with love and joy.
Hermes with Gods and men even from that day
Mingled, and wrought the latter much annoy,

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And little profit, going far astray
Through the dun night. Farewell, delightful Boy,
Of Jove and Maia sprung,—never by me,
Nor thou, nor other songs, shall unremembered be.

THE CYCLOPS:

A SATYRIC DRAMA.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK OF EURIPEDES.

SILENUS.	ULYSSES.
CHORUS OF SATYRS.	THE CYCLOPS.

Silenus. O BACCHUS, what a world of toil, both now
And ere these limbs were overworn with age,
Have I endured for thee! First, when thou fled'st
The mountain-nymphs who nurst thee, driven afar
By the strange madness Juno sent upon thee;
Then in the battle of the sons of Earth,
When I stood foot by foot close to thy side,
No unpropitious fellow combatant,
And, driving through his shield my winged spear,
Slew vast Enceladus. Consider now,
Is it a dream of which I speak to thee?
By Jove it is not, for you have the trophies!
And now I suffer more than all before;
For, when I heard that Juno had devised
A tedious voyage for you, I put to sea

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With all my children quaint in search of you,
And I myself stood on the beaked prow
And fixed the naked mast, and all my boys,
Leaning upon their oars, with splash and strain
Made white with foam the green and purple sea,—
And so we sought you, king. We were sailing
Near Malea, when an eastern wind arose,
And drove us to this wild Ætnean rock;
The one-eyed children of the Ocean God,
The man-destroying Cyclopses inhabit,
On this wild shore, their solitary caves,
And one of these, named Polypheme, has caught us
To be his slaves; and so, for all delight
Of Bacchic sports, sweet dance and melody,
We keep this lawless giant's wandering flocks.
My sons indeed, on far declivities,
Young things themselves, tend on the youngling sheep,
But I remain to fill the water casks,
Or sweeping the hard floor, or ministering
Some impious and abominable meal
To the fell Cyclops. I am wearied of it!
And now I must scrape up the littered floor
With this great iron rake, so to receive
My absent master and his evening sheep
In a cave neat and clean. Even now I see
My children tending the flocks hitherward.
Ha! what is this? are your Sicinnian measures
Even now the same as when with dance and song
You brought young Bacchus to Athæa's halls?

* * * * *

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CHORUS OF SATYRS.

STROPHE.

Where has he of race divine
Wandered in the winding rocks?
Here the air is calm and fine
For the father of the flocks;—
Here the grass is soft and sweet,
And the river-eddies meet
In the trough beside the cave,
Bright as in their fountain wave.—
Neither here, nor on the dew
Of the lawny uplands feeding?
Oh, you come!—a stone at you
Will I throw to mend your breeding;—
Get along, you horned thing,
Wild, seditious, rambling!

EPODE.*

An Iacchic melody
To the golden Aphrodite
Will I lift, as erst did I
Seeking her and her delight
With the Mænads, whose white feet
To the music glance and fleet.
Bacchus, O beloved, where,
Shaking wide thy yellow hair,
Wanderest thou alone, afar?
To the one-eyed Cyclops, we,
Who by right thy servants are,
Minister in misery,
In these wretched goat-skins clad,
Far from thy delights and thee.

* The Antistrophe is omitted.

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Sil. Be silent, sons; command the slaves to drive
The gathered flocks into the rock-roofed cave.
Chorus. Go! But what needs this serious haste, O father?
Sil. I see a Greek ship's boat upon the coast,
And thence the rowers with some general
Approaching to this cave. About their necks
Hang empty vessels, as they wanted food,
And water-flasks.—O miserable strangers!
Whence come they, that they know not what and who
My master is, approaching in ill hour
The inhospitable roof of Polypheme,
And the Cyclopian jaw-bone, man-destroying?
Be silent, Satyrs, while I ask and hear,
Whence coming, they arrive the Ætnean hill.
Ulys. Friends, can you show me some clear water spring,
The remedy of our thirst? Will any one
Furnish with food seamen in want of it?
Ha! what is this? We seems to be arrived
At the blithe court of Bacchus. I observe
This sportive band of Satyrs near the caves.
First let me greet the elder.—Hail!
Sil. Hail thou,
O Stranger! Tell thy country and thy race.
Ulys. The Ithacan Ulysses and the king
Of Cephalonia.
Sil. Oh! I know the man,
Wordy and shrewd, the son of Sisyphus.
Ulys. I am the same, but do not rail upon me.—
Sil. Whence sailing do you come to Sicily?
Ulys. From Ilion, and from the Trojan toils.
Sil. How, touched you not at your paternal shore?
Ulys. The strength of tempests bore me here by force.
Sil. The self-same accident occurred to me.
Ulys. Where you then driven here by stress of wea

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Sil. Following the Pirates who had kidnapped Bacchus.

Ulys. What land is this, and who inhabit it?—

Sil. Ætna, the loftiest peak in Sicily.

Ulys. And are there walls, and tower-surrounded towns?

Sil. There are not.—These lone rocks are bare of men.

Ulys. And who possess the land? the race of beasts?

Sil. Cyclops, who live in caverns, not in houses.

Ulys. Obeying whom? Or is the state popular?

Sil. Shepherds: no one obeys any in aught.

Ulys. How live they? do they sow the corn of Ceres?

Sil. On milk and cheese, and on the flesh of sheep.

Ulys. Have they the Bromian drink from the vine's stream?

Sil. Ah! no; they live in an ungracious land.

Ulys. And are they just to strangers?—hospitable?

Sil. They think the sweetest thing a stranger brings
Is his own flesh.

Ulys. What! do they eat man's flesh?

Sil. No one comes here who is not eaten up.

Ulys. The Cyclops now—Where is he? Not at home?

Sil. Absent on Ætna, hunting with his dogs.

Ulys. Know'st thou what thou must do to aid us hence?

Sil. I know not: we will help you all we can.

Ulys. Provide us food, of which we are in want.

Sil. Here is not any thing, as I said, but meat.

Ulys. But meat is a sweet remedy for hunger.

Sil. Cow's milk there is, and store of curdled cheese.

Ulys. Bring out:—I would see all before I bargain.

Sil. But how much gold will you engage to give?

Ulys. I bring no gold, but Bacchic juice.

Sil. O joy!
'Tis long since these dry lips were wet with wine.

Ulys. Maron, the son of the God, gave it me.

Sil. Whom I have nursed a baby in my arms.

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Ulys. The son of Bacchus, for your clearer knowledge.

Sil. Have you it now?—or is it in the ship?

Ulys. Old man, this skin contains it, which you see.

Sil. Why this would hardly be a mouthful for me.

Uly. Nay, twice as much as you can draw from thence.

Sil. You speak of a fair fountain, sweet to me.

Ulys. Would you first taste of the unmingled wine?

Sil. 'Tis just—tasting invites the purchaser.

Ulys. Here is the cup, together with the skin.

Sil. Pour: that the draught may fillip my remembrance.

Ulys. See!

Sil. Papaiapæx! what a sweet smell it has!

Ulys. You see it then?—

Sil. By Jove, no! but I smell it.

Ulys. Taste, that you may not praise it in words only.

Sil. Babai! Great Bacchus calls me forth to dance! Joy! joy!

Ulys. Did it flow sweetly down your throat?

Sil. So that it tingled to my very nails.

Ulys. And in addition I will give you gold.

Sil. Let gold alone! only unlock the cask.

Ulys. Bring out some cheeses now, or a young goat.

Sil. That will I do, despising any master.
Yes, let me drink one cup, and I will give
All that the Cyclops feed upon their mountains.

* * * * *

Chorus. Ye have taken Troy, and laid your hands on Helen?

Ulys. And utterly destroyed the race of Priam.

Sil. * * * * *
The wanton wretch! She was bewitched to see
The many-coloured anklets and the chain
Of woven gold which girt the neck of Paris,

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And so she left that good man Menelaus.
There should be no more women in the world
But such as are reserved for me alone.—
See, here are sheep, and here are goats, Ulysses;
Here are unsparing cheeses of pressed milk;
Take them; depart with what good speed ye may;
First leaving my reward, the Bacchic dew
Of joy-inspiring grapes.

Ulys. Ah me! Alas!
What shall we do? the Cyclops is at hand!
Old man, we perish! whither can we fly?

Sil. Hide yourselves quick within that hollow rock.

Ulys. 'Twere perilous to fly into the net.

Sil. The cavern has recesses numberless;
Hide yourselves quick.

Ulys. That will I never do!
The mighty Troy would be indeed disgraced
If I should fly one man. How many times
Have I withstood, with shield immoveable,
Ten thousand Phrygians!—If I needs must die,
Yet will I die with glory;—if I live,
The praise which I have gained will yet remain.

Sil. What, ho! assistance, comrades, haste, assistance!

The CYCLOPS, SILENUS, ULYSSES; CHORUS.

Cyclops. What is this tumult? Bacchus is not here,
Nor tympanies nor brazen castanets.
How are my young lambs in the cavern? Milking
Their dams, or playing by their sides? And is
The new cheese pressed into the bull-rush baskets?
Speak! I'll beat some of you till you rain tears—
Look up, not downwards, when I speak to you.

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Sil. See! I now gape at Jupiter himself,
I stare upon Orion and the stars.
Cyc. Well, is the dinner fitly cooked and laid?
Sil. All ready, if your throat is ready too.
Cyc. Are the bowls full of milk besides?
Sil. O'er brimming;
So you may drink a tunful if you will.
Cyc. It is ewe's milk, or cow's milk, or both mixed?—
Sil. Both, either; only pray don't swallow me.
Cyc. By no means.——
* * *
What is this crowd I see beside the stalls?
Outlaws or thieves? for near my cavern-home
I see my young lambs coupled two by two
With willow bands; mixed with my cheeses lie
Their implements; and this old fellow here
Has his bald head broken with stripes.
Sil. Ah me!
I have been beaten till I burn with fever.
Cyc. By whom? Who laid his fist upon your head?
Sil. Those men, because I would not suffer them
To steal your goods.
Cyc. Did not the rascals know
I am a God, sprung from the race of heaven?
Sil. I told them so, but they bore off your things,
And ate the cheese in spite of all I said,
And carried out the lambs—and said, moreover,
They'd pin you down with a three-cubit collar,
And pull your vitals out through your one eye,
Torture your back with stripes; then, binding you,
Throw you as ballast into the ship's hold,
And then deliver you, a slave, to move
Enormous rocks, or found a vestibule.
Cyc. In truth? Nay, haste, and place in order quickly
The cooking knives, and heap upon the hearth,

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And kindle it, a great faggot of wood.—
As soon as they are slaughtered, they shall fill
My belly, broiling warm from the live coals,
Or boiled and seethed within the bubbling cauldron.
I am quite sick of the wild mountain game;
Of stags and lions I have gorged enough,
And I grow hungry for the flesh of men.

Sil. Nay, master, something new is very pleasant
After one thing for ever, and of late
Very few strangers have approached our cave.

Ulys. Hear, Cyclops, a plain tale on the other side.
We, wanting to buy food, came from our ship
Into the neighbourhood of your cave, and here
This old Silenus gave us in exchange
These lambs for wine, the which he took and drank,
And all by mutual compact, without force.
There is no word of truth in what he says,
For slily he was selling all your store.

Sil. I? May you perish, wretch—

Ulys. If I speak false!

Sil. Cyclops, I swear by Neptune who begot thee,
By mighty Triton and by Nereus old,
Calypso and the glaucous ocean Nymphs,
The sacred waves and all the race of fishes—
Be these the witnesses, my dear sweet master,
My darling little Cyclops, that I never
Gave any of your stores to these false strangers.—
If I speak false may those whom most I love,
My children, perish wretchedly!

Cho. There stop!
I saw him giving these things to the strangers.
If I speak false, then may my father perish,
But do not thou wrong hospitality.

Cyc. You lie! I swear that he is juster far
Than Rhadamanthus—I trust more in him.

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But let me ask, whence have ye sailed, O strangers?
Who are you? and what city nourished ye?
Ulys. Our race is Ithacan.—Having destroyed
The town of Troy, the tempests of the sea
Have driven us on thy land, O Polypheme.
Cyc. What, have ye shared in the unenvied spoil
Of the false Helen, near Scamander's stream?
Ulys. The same, having endured a woful toil.
Cyc. O basest expedition! Sailed ye not
From Greece to Phrygia for one woman's sake?
Ulys. Twas the Gods' work—no mortal was in fault.
But, O great offspring of the ocean-king,
We pray thee and admonish thee with freedom,
That thou dost spare thy friends who visit thee,
And place no impious food within thy jaws;
For in the depths of Greece we have upreared
Temples to thy great father, which are all
His homes. The sacred bay of Tænarus
Remains inviolate, and each dim recess
Scooped high on the Malean promontory,
And aery Sunium's silver-veined crag,
Which divine Pallas keeps unprofaned ever,
The Gerastian asylums, and whate'er
Within wide Greece our enterprise has kept
From Phrygian contumely; and in which
You have a common care, for you inhabit
The skirts of Grecian land, under the roots
Of Ætna and its crags, spotted with fire.
Turn then to converse under human laws;
Receive us shipwrecked suppliants, and provide
Food, clothes, and fire, and hospitable gifts;
Nor, fixing upon oxen-piercing spits
Our limbs, so fill your belly and your jaws.
Priam's wide land has widowed Greece enough;

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And weapon-winged murder heaped together
Enough of dead, and wives are husbandless,
And ancient women and grey fathers wail
Their childless age.—If you should roast the rest,
And 'tis a bitter feast that you prepare,
Where then would any turn? Yet be persuaded;
Forego the lust of your jaw-bone; prefer
Pious humanity to wicked will:
Many have bought too dear their evil joys.

Sil. Let me advise you; do not spare a morsel
Of all his flesh. If you should eat his tongue,
You would become most eloquent, O Cyclops.

Cyc. Wealth, my good fellow, is the wise man's God.
All other things are a pretence and boast.
What are my father's ocean promontories,
The sacred rocks whereon he dwells, to me?
Stranger, I laugh to scorn Jove's thunderbolt;
I know not that his strength is more than mine.
As to the rest I care not.—When he pours
Rain from above, I have a close pavilion
Under this rock, in which I lie supine,
Feasting on a roast calf or some wild beast,
And drinking pans of milk, and gloriously
Emulating the thunder of high heaven.
And when the Thracian wind pours down the snow,
I wrap my body in the skins of beasts,
Kindle a fire, and bid the snow whirl on.
The earth, by force, whether it will or no,
Bringing forth grass, fattens my flocks and herds,
Which, to what other God but to myself
And this great belly, first of deities,
Should I be bound to sacrifice? I well know
The wise man's only Jupiter is this,
To eat and drink during his little day,

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And give himself no care. And as for those
Who complicate with laws the life of man,
I freely give them tears for their reward.
I will not cheat my soul of its delight,
Or hesitate in dining upon you:—
And that I may be quit of all demands,
These are my hospitable gifts;—fierce fire
And yon ancestral cauldron, which o'er bubbling
Shall finely cook your miserable flesh.
Creep in!—

* * * *

Ulys. Ay, ay! I have escaped the Trojan toils,
I have escaped the sea, and now I fall
Under the cruel grasp of one impious man.
O Pallas, mistress, Goddess, sprung from Jove,
Now, now, assist me! Mightier toils than Troy
Are these;—I totter on the chasms of peril;—
And thou who inhabitest the thrones
Of the bright stars, look, hospitable Jove,
Upon this outrage of thy deity,
Otherwise be considered as no God.

Chorus (*alone.*) For your gaping gulph and your gullet wide
The ravine is ready on every side.
The limbs of the strangers are cooked and done.
There is boiled meat, and roast meat, and meat from the coa,
You may chop it, and tear it, and gnash it for fun,
A hairy goat's-skin contains the whole.
Let me but escape, and ferry me o'er
The stream of your wrath to a safer shore.

The Cyclops Ætnean is cruel and bold,
He murders the strangers
That sit on his hearth,

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And dreads no avengers
To rise from the earth.
He roasts the men before they are cold,
He snatches them broiling from the coal,
And from the cauldron pulls them whole,
And minces their flesh and gnaws their bone
With his cursed teeth, till all be gone.

Farewell, foul pavilion!
Farewell, rites of dread!
The Cyclops vermillion,
With slaughter uncloying,
Now feasts on the dead,
In the flesh of strangers joying!

Ulys. O Jupiter! I saw within the cave
Horrible things; deeds to be feigned in words,
But not believed as being done.

Chorus. What! sawest thou the impious Polypheme
Feasting upon your loved companions now?

Ulys. Selecting two, the plumpest of the crowd,
He grasped them in his hands.—

Chorus. Unhappy man!

* * * *

Ulys. Soon as we came into this craggy place,
Kindling a fire, he cast on the broad hearth
The knotty limbs of an enormous oak,
Three waggon loads at least, and then he strewed
Upon the ground, beside the red fire light,
His couch of pine leaves; and he milked the cows,
And pouring forth the white milk, filled a bowl
Three cubits wide and four in depth, as much
As would contain four amphoræ, and bound it
With ivy wreaths; then placed upon the fire
A brazen pot to boil, and made red hot
The points of spits, not sharpened with the sickle,

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But with a fruit-tree bough, and with the jaws
Of axes for Ætnean slaughterings.*
And when this God-abandoned cook of hell
Had made all ready, he seized two of us,
And killed them in a kind of measured manner;
For he flung one against the brazen rivets
Of the huge cauldron, and seized the other
By the foot's tendon, and knocked out his brains
Upon the sharp edge of the craggy stone:
Then peeled his flesh with a great cooking knife,
And put him down to roast. The other's limbs
He chopped into the cauldron to be boiled.
And I, with the tears raining from my eyes,
Stood near the Cyclops, ministering to him;
The rest, in the recesses of the cave,
Clung to the rock like bats, bloodless with fear.
When he was filled with my companions' flesh,
He threw himself upon the ground, and sent
A loathsome exhalation from his maw.
Then a divine thought came to me. I filled
The cup of Maron, and I offered him
To taste, and said:—"Child of the Ocean God,
Behold what drink the vines of Greece produce,
The exultation and the joy of Bacchus."
He, satiated with his unnatural food,
Received it, and at one draught drank it off,
And, taking my hand, praised me:—"Thou hast given
A sweet draught after a sweet meal, dear guest."
And I, perceiving that it pleased him, filled
Another cup, well knowing that the wine
Would wound him soon and take a sure revenge.
And the charm fascinated him, and I

* I confess I do not understand this.—*Note of the Author.*

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Plied him cup after cup, until the drink
Had warmed his entrails, and he sang aloud
In concert with my wailing fellow-seamen
A hideous discord—and the cavern rung.
I have stolen out, so that if you will
You may achieve my safety and your own.
But say, do you desire, or not, to fly
This uncompanionable man, and dwell,
As was your wont, among the Grecian nymphs,
Within the fanes of your beloved God?
Your father there within agrees to it,
But he is weak and overcome with wine,
And, caught as if with bird-lime by the cup,
He claps his wings and crows in doating joy.
You who are young escape with me, and find
Bacchus your ancient friend; unsuited he
To this rude Cyclops.

Chorus. O my dearest friend,
That I could see that day, and leave for ever
The impious Cyclops.

* * * *

Ulys. Listen then what a punishment I have
For this fell monster, how secure a flight
From your hard servitude.

Chorus. Oh sweeter far
Than is the music of an Asian lyre
Would be the news of Polypheme destroyed.

Ulys. Delighted with the Bacchic drink, he goes
To call his brother Cyclops—who inhabit
A village upon Ætna not far off.

Chorus. I understand: catching him when alone,
You think by some measure to dispatch him,
Or thrust him from the precipice.

Ulys. O no;
Nothing of that kind; my device is subtle.

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Chorus. How then? I heard of old that thou wert wise

Ulys. I will dissuade him from this plan, by saying
It were unwise to give the Cyclopses
This precious drink, which if enjoyed alone
Would make life sweeter for a longer time.
When, vanquished by the Bacchic power, he sleeps,
There is a trunk of olive wood within,
Whose point, having made sharp with this good sword,
I will conceal in fire, and when I see
It is alight, will fix it, burning yet,
Within the socket of the Cyclops' eye,
And melt it out with fire—as when a man
Turns by its handle a great auger round,
Fitting the frame-work of a ship with beams,
So will I in the Cyclops' fiery eye
Turn round the brand, and dry the pupil up.

Chorus. Joy! I am mad with joy at your device.

Ulys. And then with you, my friends, and the old man,
We'll load the hollow depth of our black ship,
And row with double strokes from this dread shore.

Chorus. May I, as in libations to a God,
Share in the blinding him with the red brand?
I would have some communion in his death.

Ulys. Doubtless: the brand is a great brand to hold.

Chorus. Oh! I would lift a hundred waggon loads,
If like a wasp's nest I could scoop the eye out
Of the detested Cyclops.

Ulys. Silence now!
Ye know the close device—and, when I call,
Look ye obey the masters of the craft.
I will not save myself and leave behind
My comrades in the cave: I might escape,
Having got clear from that obscure recess,

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But 'twere unjust to leave in jeopardy
The dear companions who sailed here with me.

Chorus. Come! who is first that with his hand
Will urge down the burning brand
Through the lids, and quench and pierce
The Cyclops' eye so fiery fierce?

Semi-chorus I. *Song within.*
Listen! listen! he is coming,
A most hideous discord humming,
Drunken, useless, awkward, yelling,
Far along his rocky dwelling;
Let us with some comic spell
Teach the yet unteachable.
By all means he must be blinded,
If my council be but minded.

Semi-chorus II. Happy those made odorous
With the dew which sweet grapes weep,
To the village hastening thu,
Seek the vines that soothe to sleep,
Having first embraced thy friend,
There in luxury without end,
With the strings of yellow hair,
Of thy voluptuous leman fair,
Shalt sit playing on a bed!—
Speak, what door is opened?

Cyc. Ha! ha! ha! I'm full of wine,
Heavy with the joy divine,
With the young feast oversated.
Like a merchant's vessel freighted
To the water's edge, my crop
Is laden to the gullet's top.
The fresh meadow grass of spring
Tempt me forth, thus wandering

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To my brothers on the mountains,
Who shall share the wine's sweet fountains.
Bring the cask, O stranger, bring!
Chorus. One with eyes the fairest
Cometh from his dwelling;
Some one loves thee, rarest,
Bright beyond my telling.
In thy grace thou shinest
Like some nymph divinest,
In her caverns dewy:—
All delights pursue thee.
Soon pied flowers, sweet-breathing,
Shall thy head be wreathing.

Ulys. Listen, O Cyclops, for I am well skilled
In Bacchus, whom I gave thee of to drink.

Cyc. What sort of God is Bacchus then accounted?

Ulys. The greatest among men for joy of life.

Cyc. I gulpt him down with very great delight.

Ulys. This is a God who never injures men.

Cyc. How does the God like living in a skin?

Ulys. He is content wherever he is put.

Cyc. Gods should not have their body in a skin.

Ulys. If he give joy, what is his skin to you?

Clyc. I hate the skin, but love the wine within.

Ulys. Stay here; now drink, and make your spirit glad.

Cyc. Should I not share this liquor with my brothers?

Ulys. Keep it yourself, and be more honoured so.

Cyc. I were more useful, giving to my friends.

Ulys. But village mirth breeds contests, broils, and blows.

Cyc. When I am drunk none shall lay hands on me.—

Ulys. A drunken man is better within doors.

Cyc. He is a fool, who drinking loves not mirth.

Ulys. But he is wise, who, drunk, remains at home.

Cyc. What shall I do, Silenus? Shall I st[illegible]

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Sil. Stay—for what need have you of pot companions!

Cyc. Indeed this place is closely carpeted
With flowers and grass.

Sil. And in the sun-warm noon
'Tis sweet to drink. Lie down beside me now,
Placing your mighty sides upon the ground.

Cyc. What do you put the cup behind me for?

Sil. That no one here may touch it.

Cyc. Thievish one!
You want to drink;—here, place it in the midst.
And thou, O stranger, tell how art thou called?

Ulys. My name is Nobody. What favour now
Shall I receive to praise you at your hands?

Cyc. I'll feast on you the last of your companions.

Ulys. You grant your guest a fair reward, O Cyclops.

Cyc. Ha! what is this? Stealing the wine, you rogue!

Sil. It was this stranger kissing me, because
I looked so beautiful.

Cyc. You shall repent
For kissing the coy wine that loves you not.

Sil. By Jupiter! you said that I am fair.

Cyc. Pour out, and only give me the cup full.

Sil. How is it mixed? Let me observe.

Cyc. Curse you!
Give it me so.

Sil. Not till I see you wear
That coronal, and taste the cup to you.

Cyc. Thou wily traitor!

Sil. But the wine is sweet.
Aye, you will roar if you are caught in drinking.

Cyc. See now, my lip is clean and all my beard.

Sil. Now put your elbow right, and drink again.
As you see me drink— * * * *

Cyc. How now?

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Sil. Ye Gods, what a delicious gulp!

Cyc. Guest, take it;—you pour out the wine for me.

Ulys. The wine is well accustomed to my hand.

Cyc. Pour out the wine!

Ulys. I pour; only be silent.

Cyc. Silence is a hard task to him who drinks.

Ulys. Take it and drink it off; leave not a dreg.
Oh, that the drinker died with his own draught!

Cyc. Papai! the vine must be a sapient plant.

Ulys. If you drink much after a mighty feast,
Moistening your thirsty maw, you will sleep well;
If you leave aught, Bacchus will dry you up.

Cyc. Ho! ho! I can scarce rise. What pure delight!
The heavens and earth appear to whirl about
Confusedly. I see the throne of Jove
And the clear congregation of the Gods.
Now if the Graces tempted me to kiss
I would not, for the loveliest of them all
I would not leave this Ganymede.

Sil. Polypheme,
I am the Ganymede of Jupiter.

Cyc. By Jove you are; I bore you off from Dardanus.

Ulysses *and the* Chorus.

Ulys. Come, boys of Bacchus, children of high race,
This man within is folded up in sleep,
And soon will vomit flesh from his fell maw;
The brand under the shed thrusts out its smoke,
No preparation needs, but to burn out
The monster's eye;—but bear yourselves like men.

Chorus. We will have courage like the adamant rock.
All things are ready for you here; go in,
Before our father shall perceive the noise.

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Ulys. Vulcan, Ætnean king! burn out with fire
The shining eye of this thy neighbouring monster!
And thou, O Sleep, nursling of gloomy night,
Descend unmixed on this God-hated beast,
And suffer not Ulysses and his comrades,
Returning from their famous Trojan toils,
To perish by this man, who cares not either
For God or mortal; or I needs must think
That Chance is a supreme divinity,
And things divine are subject to her power.

Chorus. Soon a crab the throat will seize
Of him who feeds upon his guest;
Fire will burn his lamp-like eyes
In revenge of such a feast!
A great oak stump now is lying
In the ashes yet undying.
Come, Maron, come!
Raging let him fix the doom,
Let him tear the eyelid up,
Of the Cyclops—that his cup
May be evil!
Oh, I long to dance and revel
With sweet Bromian, long desired,
In loved ivy-wreathes attired;
Leaving this abandoned home—
Will the moment ever come?

Ulys. Be silent, ye wild things! Nay, hold your peace,
And keep your lips quite close; dare not to breathe,
Or spit, or e'en wink, lest ye wake the monster,
Until his eye be tortured out with fire.

Chorus. Nay, we are silent, and we chaw the air.

Ulys. Come now, and lend a hand to the great stake
Within—it is delightfully red hot.

Chorus. You then command who first should seize the stake

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To burn the Cyclops' eye, that all may share
In the great enterprize.
Semi-chorus I. We are too few;
We cannot at this distance from the door
Thrust fire into his eye.
Semi-chorus II. And we just now
Have become lame; cannot move hand or foot.
Chorus. The same thing has occured to us;—our ancles
Are sprained with standing here, I know not how.
Ulys. What, sprained with standing still?
Chorus. And there is dust
Or ashes in our eyes, I know not whence.
Ulys. Cowardly dogs! ye will not aid me then?
Chorus. With pitying my own back and my back bone,
And with not wishing all my teeth knocked out,
This cowardice comes of itself—but stay:
I know a famous Orphic incantation
To make the brand stick of its own accord
Into the skull of this one-eyed son of Earth.
Ulys. Of old I knew ye thus by nature; now
I know ye better.—I will use the aid
Of my own comrades—yet though weak of hand
Speak cheerfully, that so ye may awaken
The courage of my friends with your blithe words.
Chorus. This I will do with peril of my life,
And blind you with my exhortations, Cyclops.
Hasten and thrust,
And parch up to dust,
The eye of the beast,
Who feeds on his guest.
Burn and blind
The Ætnean hind!
Scoop and draw,

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But beware lest he claw
Your limbs near his maw.

Cyc. Ah me! my eye-sight is parched up to cinders.

Chorus. What a sweet pæan! sing me that again!

Cyc. Ah me! indeed, what woe has fallen upon me!
But, wretched nothings, think ye not to flee
Out of this rock; I, standing at the outlet,
Will bar the way, and catch you as you pass.

Chorus. What are you roaring out, Cyclops?

Cyc. I perish!

Chorus. For you are wicked.

Cyc. And besides miserable.

Chorus. What, did you fall into the fire when drunk?

Cyc. 'Twas Nobody destroyed me.

Chorus. Why then no one
Can be to blame.

Cyc. I say 'twas Nobody
Who blinded me.

Chorus. Why then you are not blind.

Cyc. I wish you were as blind as I am.

Chorus. Nay,
It cannot be that no one made you blind.

Cyc. You jeer me; where, I ask, is Nobody?

Chorus. No where, O Cyclops * * *

Cyc. It was that stranger ruined me:—the wretch
First gave me wine, and then burnt out my eye,
For wine is strong and hard to struggle with.
Have they escaped, or are they yet within?

Chorus. They stand under the darkness of the rock,
And cling to it.

Cyc. At my right hand or left?

Chorus. Close on your right.

Cyc. Where?

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Chorus. Near the rock itself.
You have them.
Cyc. Oh, misfortune on misfortune!
I've cracked my skull.
Chorus Now they escape you there.
Cyc. Not there, although you say so.
Chorus. Not on that side.
Cyc. Where then?
Chorus. They creep about you on your left.
Cyc. Ah! I am mocked! They jeer me in my ills.
Chorus. Not there! he is a little there beyond you.
Cyc. Detested wretch! where are you?
Ulys. Far from you
I keep with care this body of Ulysses.
Cyc. What do you say? You proffer a new name.
Ulys. My father named me so; and I have taken
A full revenge for your unnatural feast;
I should have done ill to have burned down Troy,
And not revenged the murder of my comrades.
Cyc. Ai! ai! the ancient oracle is accomplished;
It said that I should have my eyesight blinded
By you coming from Troy, yet it foretold
That you should pay the penalty for this
By wandering long over the homeless sea.
Ulys. I bid thee weep—consider what I say,
I go towards the shore to drive my ship
To mine own land, o'er the Sicilian wave.
Cyc. Not so, if whelming you with this huge stone
I can crush you and all your men together;
I will descend upon the shore, though blind,
Groping my way adown the steep ravine.
Chorus. And we, the shipmates of Ulysses now,
Will serve our Bacchus all our happy lives.

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TRANSLATION FROM MOSCHUS.

PAN loved his neighbour Echo—but that child
Of Earth and Air pined for the Satyr leaping;
The Satyr loved with wasting madness wild
The bright nymph Lyda—and so the three went weeping.
As Pan loved Echo, Echo loved the Satyr;
The Satyr, Lyda—and thus love consumed them.—
And thus to each—which was a woful matter—
To bear what they inflicted, justice doomed them;
For, inasmuch as each might hate the lover,
Each, loving, so was hated.—Ye that love not
Be warned—in thought turn this example over,
That, when ye love, the like return ye prove not.

SCENES

FROM THE "MAGICO PRODIGIOSO" OF CALDERON.

CYPRIAN *as a Student;* CLARIN *and* MOSCON *as poor Scholars, with books.*

Cyprian. In the sweet solitude of this calm place,
This intricate wild wilderness of trees
And flowers and undergrowth of odorous plants,
Leave me; the books you brought out of the house
To me are ever best society.
And whilst with glorious festival and song
Antioch now celebrates the consecration
Of a proud temple to great Jupiter,
And bears his image in loud jubilee
To its new shrine, I would consume what still

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Lives of the dying day, in studious thought,
Far from the throng and turmoil. You, my friends,
Go and enjoy the festival; it will
Be worth the labour, and return for me
When the sun seeks its grave among the billows,
Which among dim grey clouds on the horizon
Dance like white plumes upon a hearse;—and here
I shall expect you.

Moscon. I cannot bring my mind,
Great as my haste to see the festival
Certainly is, to leave you, Sir, without
Just saying some three or four hundred words.
How is it possible that on a day
Of such festivity, you can bring your mind
To come forth to a solitary country
With three or four old books, and turn your back
On all this mirth?

Clarin. My master's in the right;
There is not any thing more tiresome
Than a procession day, with troops of men,
And dances, and all that.

Mos. From first to last,
Clarin, you are a temporizing flatterer;
You praise not what you feel, but what he does;—
Toadeater!

Cla. You lie—under a mistake—
For this is the most civil sort of lie
That can be given to a man's face. I now
Say what I think.

Cyp. Enough, you foolish fellows.
Puffed up with your own doting ignorance,
You always take the two sides of one question.
Now go, and as I said, return for me
When night falls, veiling in its shadows wide
This glorious fabric of the universe.

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Mos. How happens it, although you can maintain
The folly of enjoying festivals,
That yet you go there?
Cla. Nay, the consequence
Is clear:—who ever did what he advises
Others to do?—
Mos Would that my feet were wings,
So would I fly to Livia. [*Exit.*
Cla. To speak truth,
Livia is she who has surprised my heart;
But he is more than half way there.—Soho!
Livia, I come; good sport, Livia, soho! [*Exit.*
Cyp. Now, since I am alone, let me examine
The question which has long disturbed my mind
With doubt, since first I read in Plinius
The words of mystic import and deep sense
In which he defines God. My intellect
Can find no God with whom these marks and signs
Fitly agree. It is a hidden truth
Which I must fathom. [*Reads.*

Enter the DEVIL, *as a fine Gentleman.*

Dæmon. Search even as thou wilt,
But thou shalt never find what I can hide.
Cyp. What noise is that among the boughs? Who moves?
What art thou?—
Dæmon. 'Tis a foreign gentleman.
Even from this morning I have lost my way
In this wild place, and my poor horse, at last
Quite overcome, has stretched himself upon
The enamelled tapestry of this mossy mountain,
And feeds and rests at the same time. I was
Upon my way to Antioch upon business
Of some importance, but wrapt up in cares

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(Who is exempt from this inheritance)
I parted from my company, and lost
My way, and lost my servants and my comrades.
Cyp. 'Tis singular, that, even within the sight
Of the high towers of Antioch, you could lose
Your way. Of all the avenues and green paths
Of this wild wood there is not one but leads,
As to its centre, to the walls of Antioch;
Take which you will you cannot miss your road.
Dæmon. And such is ignorance! Even in the sight
Of knowledge it can draw no profit from it.
But, as it still is early, and as I
Have no acquaintances in Antioch,
Being a stranger there, I will even wait
The few surviving hours of the day,
Until the night shall conquer it. I see
Both by your dress and by the books in which
You find delight and company, that you
Are a great student;—for my part, I feel
Much sympathy with such pursuits,
Cyp. Have you
Studied much?—
Dæmon. No;—and yet I know enough
Not to be wholly ignorant.
Cyp. Pray, Sir,
What science may you know?—
Dæmon. Many.
Cyp. Alas!
Much pains must we expend on one alone,
And even then attain it not;—but you
Have the presumption to assert that you
Know many without study.
Dæmon. And with truth.
For, in the country whence I come, sciences
Require no learning,—they are known.

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Cyp. Oh, would
I were of that bright country! for in this
The more we study, we the more discover
Our ignorance.

Dæmon. It is so true that I
Had so much arrogance as to oppose
The chair of the most high Professorship,
And obtained many votes, and though I lost,
The attempt was still more glorious than the failure
Could be dishonourable: if you believe not,
Let us refer it to dispute respecting
That which you know best, and although I
Know not the opinion you maintain, and though
It be the true one, I will take the contrary.

Cyp. The offer gives me pleasure. I am now
Debating with myself upon a passage
Of Plinius, and my mind is racked with doubt
To understand and know who is the God
Of whom he speaks.

Dæmon. It is a passage, if
I recollect it right, couched in these words:
"God is one supreme goodness, one pure essence,
One substance, and one sense, all sight, all hands."

Cyp. 'Tis true.

Dæmon. What difficulty find you here?

Cyp. I do not recognize among the Gods
The God defined by Plinius: if he must
Be supreme goodness, even Jupiter
Is not supremely good; because we see
His deeds are evil, and his attributes
Tainted with mortal weakness. In what manner
Can supreme goodness be consistent with
The passions of humanity?

Dæmon. The wisdom
Of the old world masked with the names of God

The attributes of Nature and of Man;
A sort of popular philosophy.
Cyp. This reply will not satisfy me, for
Such awe is due to the high name of God
That ill should never be imputed. Then,
Examining the question with more care,
It follows, that the gods should always will
That which is best, were they supremely good.
How then does one will one thing—one another?
And you may not say that I allege
Poetical or philosophic learning:—
Consider the ambiguous responses
Of their oracular statues; from two shrines
Two armies shall obtain the assurance of
One victory. Is it not indisputable
That two contending wills can never lead
To the same end? And, being opposite,
If one be good is not the other evil?
Evil in God is inconceivable;
But supreme goodness fails among the gods
Without their union.
Dæmon. I deny your major.
These responses are means towards some end
Unfathomed by our intellectual beam.
They are the work of providence, and more
The battle's loss may profit those who lose,
Than victory advantage those who win.
Cyp. That I admit, and yet that God should not
(Falsehood is incompatible with deity)
Assure the victory, it would be enough
To have permitted the defeat; if God
Be all sight,—God, who beheld the truth,
Would not have given assurance of an end
Never to be accomplished; thus, although
The Diety may according to his attributes

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Be well distinguished into persons, yet,
Even in the minutest circumstance,
His essence must be one.

Dæmon. To attain the end
The affections of the actors in the scene
Must have been thus influenced by his voice.

Cyp. But for a purpose thus subordinate
He might have employed genii, good or evil,—
A sort of spirits called so by the learned,
Who roam about inspiring good or evil,
And from whose influence and existence we
May well infer our immortality:—
Thus God might easily, without descending
To a gross falsehood in his proper person,
Have moved the affections by this mediation
To the just point.

Dæmon. These trifling contradictions
Do not suffice to impugn the unity
Of the high gods; in things of great importance
They still appear unanimous; consider
That glorious fabric—man, his workmanship,
Is stamped with one conception.

Cyp. Who made man
Must have, methinks, the advantage of the others.
If they are equal, might they not have risen
In opposition to the work, and being
All hands, according to our author here,
Have still destroyed even as the other made?
If equal in their power, and only unequal
In opportunity, which of the two
Will remain conqueror?

Dæmon. On impossible
And false hypothesis, there can be built
No argument. Say, what do you infer
From this?

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Cyp. That there must be a mighty God
Of supreme goodness and of highest grace,
All sight, all hands, all truth, infallible,
Without an equal and without a rival;
The cause of all things and the effect of nothing,
One power, one will, one substance, and one essence.
And in whatever persons, one or two,
His attributes may be distinguished, one
Sovereign power, one solitary essence,
One cause of all cause. [*They rise.*

Dæmon. How can I impugn
So clear a consequence?

Cyp. Do you regret
My victory?

Dæmon. Who but regrets a check
In rivalry of wit? I could reply
And urge new difficulties, but will now
Depart, for I hear steps of men approaching,
And it is time that I should now pursue
My journey to the city.

Cyp. Go in peace!

Dæmon. Remain in peace! Since thus it profits him
To study, I will wrap his senses up
In sweet oblivion of all thought, but of
A piece of excellent beauty; and as I
Have power given me to wage enmity
Against Justina's soul, I will extract
From one effect two vengeances. [*Exit.*

Cyp. I never
Met a more learned person. Let me now
Resolve this doubt again with careful mind. [*He reads.*

Enter Lelio and Floro.

Lelio. Here stop. These toppling rocks and tangled boughs,
Impenetrable by the noonday beam,
Shall be sole witnesses of what we ——

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Floro. Draw!
If there were words, here is the place for deeds.
Lelio. Thou needest not instruct me; well I know
That in the field the silent tongue of steel
Speaks thus. [*They fight.*
Cyp. Ha! what is this? Lelio, Floro,
Be it enough that Cyprian stands between you,
Although unarmed.
Lelio. Whence comest thou, to stand
Between me and my vengeance?
Floro. From what rocks
And desert cells?

Enter MOSCON *and* CLARIN.

Moscon. Run, run! for where we left my master
We hear the clash of swords.
Cla. I never
Run to approach things of this sort, but only
To avoid them. Sir! Cyprian! sir!
Cyp. Be silent, fellows! What! two friends who are
In blood and fame the eyes and hope of Antioch;
One of the noble men of the Colatti,
The other son of the Governor, adventure
And cast away, on some slight cause no doubt,
'Two lives the honour of their country?
Lelio. Cyprian!
Although my high respect towards your person
Holds now my sword suspended, thou canst not
Restore it to the slumber of its scabbard.
Thou knowest more of science than the duel;
For when two men of honour take the field,
No [ ] or respect can make them friends,
But one must die in the pursuit.
Floro. I pray
That you depart hence with your people, and

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And leave us to finish what we have begun
Without advantage.

Cyp. Though you may imagine
That I know little of the laws of duel,
Which vanity and valour instituted,
You are in error. By my birth I am
Held no less than yourselves to know the limits
Of honour and of infamy, nor has study
Quenched the free spirit which first ordered them ;
And thus to me, as one well experienced
In the false quicksands of the sea of honour,
You may refer the merits of the case;
And if I should perceive in your relation
That either has the right to satisfaction
From the other, I give you my word of honour
To leave you.

Lelio. Under this condition then
I will relate the cause, and you will cede
And must confess th' impossibility
Of compromise; for the same lady is
Beloved by Floro and myself.

Floro. It seems
Much to me that the light of day should look
Upon that idol of my heart—but he—
Leave us to fight, according to thy word.

Cyprian. Permit one question further: is the lady
Impossible to hope or not ?

Lelio. She is
So excellent, that, if the light of day
Should excite Floro's jealousy, it were
Without just cause, for even the light of day
Trembles to gaze on her.

Cyp. Would you for your
Part marry her ?

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Floro. Such is my confidence.

Cyp. And you?

Lelio. O, would that I could lift my hope
So high? for, though she is extremely poor,
Her virtue is her dowry.

Cyp. And if you both
Would marry her, is it not weak and vain,
Culpable and unworthy, thus beforehand
To slur her honour. What would the world say
If one should slay the other, and if she
Should afterwards espouse the murderer?

[*The rivals agree to refer their quarrel to* CYPRIAN; *who in consequence visits* JUSTINA, *and becomes enamoured of her: she disdains him, and he retires to a solitary sea-shore.*

SCENE II.

Cyp. O memory! permit it not
That the tyrant of my thought
Be another soul that still
Holds dominion o'er the will,
That would refuse, but can no more,
To bend, to tremble, and adore.
Vain idolatry!—I saw,
And, gazing, became blind with error;
Weak ambition, which the awe
Of her presence bound to terror!
So beautiful she was—and I,
Between my love and jealousy,
Am so convulsed with hope and fear,
Unworthy as it may appear;—
So bitter is the life I live,
That, hear me, Hell! I now would give
To thy most detested spirit
My soul, for ever to inherit,

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To suffer punishment and pine,
So this woman may be mine.
Hear'st thou, Hell! dost thou reject it?
My soul is offered!
Dæmon (unseen.) I accept it.
[*Tempest, with thunder and lightning.*
Cyp. What is this! ye heavens, for ever pure,
At once intensely radiant and obscure!
Athwart the ethereal halls
The lightning's arrow and the thunder-balls
The day affright,
As from the horizon round,
Burst with earthquake sound,
In mighty torrents the electric fountains;—
Clouds quench the sun, and thunder smoke
Strangles the air, and fire eclipses heaven.
Philosophy, thou canst not even
Compel their causes underneath thy yoke,
From yonder clouds even to the waves below
The fragments of a single ruin choke
Imagination's flight;
For, on flakes of surge, like feathers light,
The ashes of the desolation cast
Upon the gloomy blast,
Tell of the footsteps of the storm.
And nearer see the melancholy form
Of a great ship, the outcast of the sea,
Drives miserably!
And it must fly the pity of the port,
Or perish, and its last and sole resort
Is its own raging enemy.
The terror of the thrilling cry
Was a fatal prophecy
Of coming death, who hovers now
Upon that shattered prow,
That they who die not may be dying still.

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And not alone the insane elements
Are populous with wild portents,
But that sad ship is as a miracle
Of sudden ruin, for it drives so fast
It seems as if it had arrayed its form
With the headlong storm.
It strikes—I almost feel the shock,—
It stumbles on a jagged rock,—
Sparkles of blood on the white foam are cast.

A Tempest—All exclaim within,

We are all lost!

Dæmon (*within.*) Now from this plank will I
Pass to the land, and thus fulfil my scheme.

Cyp. As in contempt of the elemental rage
A man comes forth in safety, while the ship's
Great form is in a watery eclipse
Obliterated from the Ocean's page,
And round its wreck the huge sea-monsters sit,
A horrid conclave, and the whistling wave
Are heaped over its carcase, like a grave.

The Dæmon enters, as escaped from the sea.

Dæmon (*aside.*) It was essential to my purposes
To wake a tumult on the sapphire ocean,
That in this unknown form I might at length
Wipe out the blot of the discomfiture
Sustained upon the mountain, and assail
With a new war the soul of Cyprian,
Forging the instruments of his destruction
Even from his love and from his wisdom.—O
Beloved earth, dear mother, in thy bosom
I seek a refuge from the monster who
Precipitates itself upon me.

Cyp. Friend,
Collect thyself; and be the memory
Of thy late suffering, and thy greatest sorrow

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But as a shadow of the past,—for nothing
Beneath the circle of the moon but flows
And changes, and can never know repose.
Dæmon. And who art thou, before whose feet my fate
Has prostrated me?
Cyp. One who, moved with pity,
Would soothe its stings.
Dæmon. Oh! that can never be!
No solace can my lasting sorrows find.
Cyp. Wherefore?
Dæmon. Because my happiness is lost.
Yet I lament what has long ceased to be
The object o desire or memory,
And my life is not life.
Cyp. Now, since the fury
Of this earthquaking hurricane is still,
And the crystalline heaven has reassumed
Its windless calm so quickly, that it seems
As if its heavy wrath had been awakened
Only to overwhelm that vessel,—speak,
Who art thou, and whence comest thou?
Dæmon. Far more
My coming hither cost than thou hast seen
Or I can tell. Among my misadventures
This shipwreck is the least. Wilt thou hear?
Cyp. Speak.
Dæmon. Since thou desirest, I will then unveil
Myself to thee;—for in myself I am
A world of happiness and misery;
This I have lost, and that I must lament
For ever. In my attributes I stood
So high and so heroically great,
In lineage so supreme, and with a genius
Which penetrated with a glance the world
Beneath my feet, that won by my high merit

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A king—whom I may call the King of kings,
Because all others tremble in their pride
Before the terrors of his countenance,
In his high palace roofed with brightest gems
Of living light—call them the stars of Heaven—
Named me his counsellor. But the high praise
Stung me with pride and envy, and I rose
In mighty competition, to ascend
His seat, and place my foot triumphantly
Upon his subject thrones. Chastised, I know
The depth to which ambition falls; too mad
Was the attempt, and yet more mad were now
Repentance of the irrevocable deed:—
Therefore I chose this ruin with the glory
Of not to be subdued, before the shame
Of reconciling me with him who reigns
By coward cession.—Nor was I alone,
Nor am I now, nor shall I be alone;
And there was hope, and there may still be hope,
For many suffrages among his vassals
Hailed me their lord and king, and many still
Are mine, and many more perchance shall be.
Thus vanquished, though in fact victorious,
I left his seat of empire, from mine eye
Shooting forth poisonous lightning, while my words
With inauspicious thunderings shook Heaven,
Proclaiming vengeance, public as my wrong,
And imprecating on his prostrate slaves
Rapine, and death, and outrage. Then I sailed
Over the mighty fabric of the world,
A pirate ambushed in its pathless sands,
A lynx crouched watchfully among its caves
And craggy shores; and I have wandered over
The expanse of these wide wildernesses
In this great ship, whose bulk is now dissolved

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In the light breathings of the invisible wind,
And which the sea has made a dustless ruin,
Seeking ever a mountain, through whose forests
I seek a man, whom I must now compel
To keep his word with me. I came arrayed
In tempest, and, although my power could well
Bridle the forest winds in their career,
For other causes I forbore to soothe
Their fury to Favonian gentleness,
I could and would not; (thus I wake in him [*Aside.*
A love of magic art.) Let not this tempest,
Nor the succeeding calm excite thy wonder;
For by my art the sun would turn as pale
As his weak sister with unwonted fear.
And in my wisdom are the orbs of Heaven
Written as in a record. I have pierced
The flaming circles of their wondrous spheres,
And know them as thou knowest every corner
Of this dim spot. Let it not seem to thee
That I boast vainly; wouldst thou that I work
A charm over this waste and savage wood,
This Babylon of crags and aged trees,
Filling its leafy coverts with a horror
Thrilling and strange? I am the friendless guest
Of these wild oaks and pines—and as from thee
I have received the hospitality
Of this rude place, I offer thee the fruit
Of years of toil in recompence; whate'er
Thy wildest dream presented to thy thought
As object of desire, that shall be thine.

* * * *

And thenceforth shall so firm an amity
'Twixt thou and me be, that neither fortune,
The monstrous phantom which pursues success,
That careful miser, that free prodigal,

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Who ever alternates with changeful hand
Evil and good, reproach and fame; nor Time,
That loadstar of the ages, to whose beam
The winged years speed o'er the intervals
Of their unequal revolutions; nor
Heaven itself, whose beautiful bright stars
Rule and adorn the world, can ever make
The least division between thee and me,
Since now I find a refuge in thy favour.

SCENE III.

The Dæmon tempts Justina, who is a Christian.

Dæmon. Abyss of Hell! I call on thee,
Thou wild misrule of thine own anarchy!
From thy prison-house set free
The spirits of voluptuous death,
That with their mighty breath
They may destroy a world of virgin thoughts;
Let her chaste mind with fancies thick as motes
Be peopled from thy shadowy deep,
Till her guiltless phantasy
Full to overflowing be!
And, with sweetest harmony,
Let birds, and flowers, and leaves, and all things move
To love, only to love.
Let nothing meet her eyes
But signs of Love's soft victories;
Let nothing meet her ear
But sounds of Love's sweet sorrow,
So that from faith no succour she may borrow,
But, guided by myspirit blind
And in a magic snare entwined,
She may now seek Cyprian.
Begin, while I in silence bind
My voice, when thy sweet song thou hast begun,

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A voice within. What is the glory far above
All else in human life?
All. Love! love!
[*While these words are sung, the Dæmon goes out at one door, and Justina enters at another.*
The first voice. There is no form in which the fire
Of love its traces has impressed not.
Man lives far more in love's desire
Than by life's breath, soon possessed not.
In all that lives must love or die,
All shapes on earth, or sea, or sky,
With one consent to Heaven cry
That the glory far above
All else in life is—
All. Love! O love!
Justina. Thou melancholy thought which art
So fluttering and so sweet, to thee
When did I give the liberty
Thus to afflict my heart?
What is the cause of this new power
Which doth my fevered being move,
Momently raging more and more?
What subtle pain is kindled now
Which from my heart doth overflow
Into my senses?—
All. Love, O love!
Justina. 'Tis that enamoured nightingale
Who gives me the reply;
He ever tells the same soft tale
Of passion and of constancy
To his mate, who, rapt and fond,
Listening sits, a bough beyond.
Be silent, Nightingale!—No more
Make me think, in hearing thee

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Thus tenderly thy love deplore,
If a bird can feel his so,
What a man would feel for me.
And, voluptuous vine, O thou
Who seekest most when least pursuing,—
To the trunk thou interlacest
Art the verdure which embracest
And the weight which is its ruin,—
No more, with green embraces, vine,
Make me think on what thou lovest,—
For, whilst thou thus thy boughs entwine,
I fear lest thou should'st teach me, sophist,
How arms might be entangled too.

Light-enchanted sunflower, thou
Who gazest ever true and tender
On the sun's revolving splendour!
Follow not his faithless glance
With thy faded countenance,
Nor teach my beating heart to fear,
If leaves can mourn without a tear,
How eyes must weep! O Nightingale,
Cease from thy enamoured tale,—
Leafy vine, unwreathe thy bower,
Restless sunflower, cease to move,—
Or tell me all, what poisonous power
Ye use against me.—

All. Love! love! love!

Justina. It cannot be!—Whom have I ever loved!
Trophies of my oblivion and disdain,
Floro and Lelio did I not reject?
And Cyprian?—

[*She becomes troubled at the name of Cyprian.*

Did I not requite him
With such severity, that he has fled

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Where none has ever heard of him again?—
Alas! I now begin to fear that this
May be the occasion whence desire grows bold,
As if there were no danger. From the moment
That I pronounced to my own listening heart
Cyprian is absent, O miserable me!
I know not what I feel! [*More calmly.*
It must be pity
To think that such a man, whom all the world
Admired, should be forgot by all the world,
And I the cause. [*She again becomes troubled.*
And yet if it were pity,
Floro and Lelio might have equal share,
For they are both imprisoned for my sake. [*Calmly.*
Alas! what reasonings are these? It is
Enough I pity him, and that, in vain,
Without this ceremonious subtlety.
And woe is me! I know not where to find him now,
Even should I seek him through this wide world.

Enter DÆMON.

Dæmon. Follow, and I will lead thee where he is.

Justina. And who art thou, who hast found entrance hither,
Into my chamber through the doors and locks?
Art thou a monstrous shadow which my madness
Has formed in the idle air?

Dæmon. No. I am one
Called by the thought which tyrannizes thee
From his eternal dwelling; who this day
Is pledged to bear thee unto Cyprian.

Justina. So shall thy promise fail. This agony
Of passion which afflicts my heart and soul
May sweep imagination in its storm;
The will is firm.

Dæmon. Already half is done
In the imagination of an act.

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The sin incurred, the pleasure then remains,
Let not the will stop half-way on the road.
Justina. I will not be discouraged, nor despair,
Although I thought it, and although 'tis true
That thought is but a prelude to the deed:—
Thought is not in my power, but action is:
I will not move my foot to follow thee.
Dæmon. But far a mightier wisdom than thine own
Exerts itself within thee, with such power
Compelling thee to that which it inclines
That it shall force thy step; how wilt thou then
Resist, Justina?
Justina. By my free-will.
Dæmon. I
Must force thy will.
Justina. It is invincible;
It were not free if thou hadst power upon it.
[*He draws, but cannot move her.*
Dæmon. Come, where a pleasure waits thee.
Justina. It were bought
Too dear.
Dæmon. 'Twill soothe thy heart to softest peace.
Justina. 'Tis dread captivity.
Dæmon. 'Tis joy, 'tis glory.
Justina. 'Tis shame, 'tis torment, 'tis despair.
Dæmon. But how
Canst thou defend thyself from that or me,
If my power drags thee onward?
Justina. My defence
Consists in God.
[*He vainly endeavours to force her, and at last releases her.*
Dæmon. Woman, thou hast subdued me,
Only by not owning thyself subdued.
But, since thou thus findest defence in God,
I will assume a feigned form, and thus

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Make thee a victim of my baffled rage.
For I will mask a spirit in thy form
Who will betray thy name to infamy,
And doubly shall I triumph in thy loss,
First by dishonouring thee, and then by turning
False pleasure to true ignomy. [*Exit.*

Justina. I
Appeal to Heaven against thee; so that Heaven
May scatter thy delusions, and the blot
Upon my fame vanish in idle thought,
Even as flame dies in the envious air,
And as the flowret wastes at morning frost,
And thou shouldst never——But, alas! to whom
Do I still speak?—Did not a man but now
Stand here before me?—No, I am alone,
And yet I saw him. Is he gone so quickly?
Or can the heated mind engender shapes
From its own fear? Some terrible and strange
Peril is near. Lisander! father! lord!
Livia!—

Enter LISANDER *and* LIVIA.

Lisander. O my daughter! what?
Livia. What?
Justina. Saw you
A man go forth from my apartment now?—
I scarce sustain myself!
Lis. A man here!
Justina. Have you not seen him?
Livia. No, Lady.
Justina. I saw him.
Lis. 'Tis impossible; the doors
Which led to this apartment were all locked.
Livia (aside.) I dare say it was Moscon whom she saw,
For he was locked up in my room.

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Lis. It must
Have been some image of thy phantasy.
Such melancholy as thou feedest is
Skilful in forming such in the vain air
Out of the motes and atoms of the day.
Livia. My master's in the right.
Justina. Oh, would it were
Delusion; but I fear some greater ill.
I feel as if out of my bleeding bosom
My heart was torn in fragments; aye,
Some mortal spell is wrought against my frame;
So potent was the charm, that had not God
Shielded my humble innocence from wrong,
I should have sought my sorrow and my shame
With willing steps.—Livia, quick bring my cloak,
For I must seek refuge from these extremes
Even in the temple of the highest God
Which secretly the faithful worship.
Livia. Here.
Justina (putting on her cloak.)
In this, as in a shroud of snow, may I
Quench the consuming fire in which I burn,
Wasting away!
Lis. And I will go with thee.
Livia. When I once see them safe out of the house
I shall breathe freely.
Justina. So do I confide
In thy just favour, Heaven!
Lis. Let us go.
Justina. Thine is the cause, great God! Turn, for my sake
And for thine own, mercifully to me!

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SCENES

FROM THE FAUST OF GOËTHE.

PROLOGUE IN HEAVEN.

The Lord and the Host of Heaven. Enter three Archangels.

Raphael. The sun makes music as of old
Amid the rival spheres of Heaven,
On its predestined circle rolled
With thunder speed: the Angels even
Draw strength from gazing on its glance,
Though none its meaning fathom may:—
The world's unwithered countenance
Is bright as at creation's day.
Gabriel. And swift and swift, with rapid lightness,
The adorned Earth spins silently,
Alternating Elysian brightness
With deep and dreadful night; the sea
Foams in broad billows from the deep
Up to the rocks, and rocks and ocean,
Onward, with spheres which never sleep,
Are hurried in eternal motion.
Mich. And tempests in contention roar
From land to sea, from sea to land;
And, raging, weave a chain of power
Which girds the earth as with a band.—
A flashing desolation there
Flames before the thunder's way;
But thy servants, Lord, revere
The gentle changes of thy day.

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Chorus of the Three.

The Angels draw strength from thy glance,
Though no one comprehend thee may;—
Thy world's unwithered countenance
Is bright as on creation's day.*

* *Raphael.* The sun sounds, according to ancient custom,
In the song of emulation of his brother-spheres,
And its fore written circle
Fulfils with a step of thunder.
Its countenance gives the Angels strength,
Though no one can fathom it.
The incredible high works
Are excellent as at the first day.
Gabriel. And swift, and inconceivably swift
The adornment of earth winds itself round,
And exchanges Paradise-clearness
With deep dreadful night.
The sea foams in broad waves
From its deep bottom up to the rocks,
And rocks and sea are torn on together
In the eternal swift course of the spheres.
Michael. And storms roar in emulation
From sea to land, from land to sea,
And make, raging, a chain
Of deepest operation round about.
There flames a flashing destruction
Before the path of the thunderbolt.
But thy servants, Lord, revere
The gentle alternations of thy day.
Chorus. Thy countenance gives the Angels strength,
Though none can comprehend thee:
And all thy lofty works
Are excellent as at the first day.

Such is a literal translation of this astonishing Chorus; it is impossible to represent in another language the melody of the versification; even the volatile strength and delicacy of the ideas escape in the crucible of translation, and the reader is surprised to find a caput mortuum. —*Author's Note.*

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Enter MEPHISTOPHELES.

Mephistopheles. As thou, O Lord, once more art kind enough
To interest thyself in our affairs—
And ask, "How goes it with you there below?"
And as indulgently at other times
Thou tookedst not my visits in ill part,
Thou seest me here once more among thy household.
Though I should scandalize this company,
You will excuse me if I do not talk
In the high style which they think fashionable;
My pathos would certainly make you laugh too,
Had you not long since given over laughing.
Nothing know I to say of suns and worlds;
I observe only how men plague themselves;—
The little god o'the world keeps the same stamp,
As wonderful as on creation's day:—
A little better would he live, hadst thou
Not given him a glimpse of heaven's light
Which he calls reason, and employs it only
To live more beastlily than any beast.
With reverence to your Lordship be it spoken,
He's like one of those long-legged grasshoppers
Who flits and jumps about, and sings for ever
The same old song i' the grass. There let him lie,
Burying his nose in every heap of dung.

The Lord. Have you no more to say? Do you come here
Always to scold, and cavil, and complain?
Seems nothing ever right to you on earth?

Meph. No, Lord! I find all there, as ever, bad at best.
Even I am sorry for man's days of sorrow;
I could myself almost give up the pleasure
Of plaguing the poor things.

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The Lord. Knowest thou Faust?
Meph. The Doctor?
The Lord. Aye; my servant Faust.
Meph. In truth
He serves you in a fashion quite his own,
And the fool's meat and drink are not of earth.
His aspirations bear him on so far
That he is half aware of his own folly,
For he demands from Heaven its fairest star,
And from the earth the highest joy it bears;
Yet all things far, and all things near, are vain
To calm the deep emotions of his breast.
The Lord. Though he now serves me in a cloud o
I will soon lead him forth to the clear day.
When trees look green, full well the gardener knows
That fruits and blooms will deck the coming year.
Meph. What will you bet?—now I am sure of w
Only observe you give me full permission
To lead him softly on my path.
The Lord. As long
As he shall live upon the earth, so long
Is nothing unto thee forbidden.—Man
Must err till he has ceased to struggle.
Meph. Thanks.
And that is all I ask; for willingly
I never make acquaintance with the dead.
The full fresh cheeks of youth are food for me,
And if a corpse knocks, I am not at home.
For I am like a cat—I like to play
A little with the mouse before I eat it.
The Lord. Well, well! it is permitted thee. Dra
His spirit from its springs; as thou find'st power,
Seize him and lead him on thy downward path;
And stand ashamed when failure teaches thee
That a good man, even in his darkest longings,
Is well aware of the right way.

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Meph. Well and good.
I am not in much doubt about my bet,
And, if I lose, then 'tis your turn to crow;
Enjoy your triumph then with a full breast.
Aye; dust shall he devour, and that with pleasure,
Like my old paramour, the famous Snake.

The Lord. Pray come here when it suits you; for I never
Had much dislike for people of your sort.
And, among all the Spirits who rebelled,
The knave was ever the least tedious to me.
The active spirit of man soon sleeps, and soon
He seeks unbroken quiet; therefore I
Have given him the Devil for a companion,
Who may provoke him to some sort of work,
And must create for ever.—But ye, pure
Children of God, enjoy eternal beauty;—
Let that which ever operates and lives
Clasp you within the limits of its love;
And seize with sweet and melancholy thoughts
The floating phantoms of its loveliness.

[*Heaven closes; the Archangels exeunt.*

Meph. From time to time I visit the old fellow,
And I take care to keep on good terms with him.
Civil enough is this same God Almighty,
To talk so freely with the Devil himself.

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SCENES

FROM THE FAUST OF GOËTHE.

MAY-DAY NIGHT.

SCENE—*The Hartz Mountain, a desolate Country.*

FAUST, MEPHISTOPHELES.

Meph. WOULD you not like a broomstick? As for me
I wish I had a good stout ram to ride;
For we are still far from th' appointed place.

Faust. This knotted staff is help enough for me,
Whilst I feel fresh upon my legs. What good
Is there in making short a pleasant way?
To creep along the labyrinths of the vales,
And climb those rocks, where ever-babbling springs
Precipitate themselves in waterfalls,
Is the true sport that seasons such a path.
Already Spring kindles the birchen spray,
And the hoar pines already feel her breath:
Shall she not work also within our limbs?

Meph. Nothing of such an influence do I feel.
My body is all wintry, and I wish;
The flowers upon our path were frost and snow.
But see, how melancholy rises now,
Dimly uplifting her belated beam,
The blank unwelcome round of the red moon,
And gives so bad a light, that every step
One stumbles 'gainst some crag. With your permission

I'll call an Ignis-fatuus to our aid:
I see one yonder burning jollily.
Halloo, my friend! may I request that you
Would favour us with your bright company?
Why should you blaze away there to no purpose?
Pray be so good as light us up this way.

Ignis-Fatuus. With reverence be it spoken, I will try
To overcome the lightness of my nature;
Our course, you know, is generally zig-zag.

Meph. Ha, ha! your worship thinks you have to deal
With men. Go strait on, in the Devil's name,
Or I shall puff your flickering life out.

Ignis-Fatuus. Well,
I see you are the master of the house;
I will accommodate myself to you.
Only consider, that to-night this mountain
Is all enchanted, and if Jack-a-lantern
Shows you his way, though you should miss your own,
You ought not to be too exact with him.

FAUST, MEPHISTOPHELES, *and* IGNIS-FATUUS, *in alternate Chorus.*

The limits of the sphere of dream,
The bounds of true and false, are past.
Lead us on, thou wandering Gleam,
Lead us onward, far and fast,
To the wide, the desert waste.

But see, how swift advance and shift
Trees behind trees, row by row,—
How, clift by clift, rocks bend and lift
Their frowning foreheads as we go.
The giant-snouted crags, ho! ho!
How they snort, and how they blow!

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Through the mossy sods and stones,
Stream and streamlet hurry down,
A rushing throng! A sound of song
Beneath the vault of Heaven is blown!
Sweet notes of love, the speaking tones
Of this bright day, sent down to say
That Paradise on Earth is known,
Resound around, beneath, above.
All we hope and all we love
Finds a voice in this blithe strain,
Which wakens hill and wood and rill,
And vibrates far o'er field and vale,
And which Echo, like the tale
Of old times, repeats again.

To whoo! to whoo! near, nearer now
The sound of song, the rushing throng!
Are the screech, the lapwing, and the jay,
All awake as if 'twere day?
See, with long legs and belly wide,
A salamander in the brake!
Every root is like a snake,
And along the loose hill side,
With strange contortions through the night,
Curls, to seize or to affright;
And, animated, strong, and many,
They dart forth polypus-antennæ,
To blister with their poison spume
The wanderer. Through the dazzling gloom
The many-coloured mice, that thread
The dewy turf beneath our tread,
In troops each other's motions cross,
Through the heath and through the moss;

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And, in legions intertangled,
The fire-flies flit, and swarm, and throng,
Till all the mountain depths are spangled.

Tell me, shall we go or stay?
Shall we onward? Come along!
Every thing around is swept
Forward, onward, far away!
Trees and masses intercept
The sight, and wisps on every side
Are puffed up and multiplied.

Meph. Now vigorously seize my skirt, and gain
This pinnacle of isolated crag.
One may observe with wonder from this point
How Mammon glows among the mountains.
Faust. Aye—
And strangely through the solid depth below
A melancholy light, like the red dawn,
Shoots from the lowest gorge of the abyss
Of mountains, lighting hitherward; there rise
Pillars of smoke, here clouds float gently by;
Here the light burns soft as the enkindled air,
Or the illumined dust of golden flowers;
And now it glides like tender colours spreading;
And now bursts forth in fountains from the earth;
And now it winds, one torrent of broad light,
Through the far valley with a hundred veins;
And now once more within that narrow corner
Masses itself into intensest splendour.
And near us see sparks spring out of the ground,
Like golden sand scattered upon the darkness;
The pinnacles of that black wall of mountains
That hems us in are kindled.

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Meph. Rare, in faith!
Does not Sir Mammon gloriously illuminate
His palace for this festival—it is
A pleasure which you had not known before.
I spy the boisterous guests already.
Faust. How
The children of the wind rage in the air!
With what fierce strokes they fall upon my neck!
Meph. Cling tightly to the old ribs of the crag.
Beware! for if with them thou warrest
In their fierce flight towards the wilderness,
Their breath will sweep thee into dust, and drag
Thy body to a grave in the abyss.
A cloud thickens the night.
Hark! how the tempest crashes through the forest
The owls fly out in strange affright;
The columns of the evergreen palaces
Are split and shattered;
The roots creak, and stretch, and groan;
And, ruinously overthrown,
The trunks are crushed and shattered
By the fierce blast's unconquerable stress.
Over each other crack and crash they all
In terrible and intertangled fall;
And through the ruins of the shaken mountain
The airs hiss and howl—
It is not the voice of the fountain,
Nor the wolf in his midnight prowl.
Dost thou not hear?
Strange accents are ringing
Aloft, afar, anear;
The witches are singing!
The torrent of a raging wizard song
Streams the whole mountain along.

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Chorus of Witches.

The stubble is yellow, the corn is green,
Now to the Brocken the witches go;
The mighty multitude here may be seen
Gathering, wizard and witch, below.
Sir Urean is sitting aloft in the air;
Hey over stock! and hey over stone!
'Twixt witches and incubi, what shall be done?
Tell it who dare! tell it who dare!

A voice. Upon a sow-swine, whose farrows were nine,
Old Baubo rideth alone.

Chorus. Honour her, to whom honour is due,
Old mother Baubo, honour to you!
An able sow, with old Baubo upon her,
Is worthy of glory, and worthy of honour!
The legion of witches is coming behind,
Darkening the night, and outspeeding the wind—

A voice. Which way comest thou?

A voice. Over Ilsenstein;
The owl was awake in the white moon-shine;
I saw her at rest in her downy nest,
And she stared at me with her broad bright eye.

Voices. And you may now as well take your course on to Hell,
Since you ride by so fast on the headlong blast.

A voice. She dropt poison upon me as I past.
Here are the wounds ——

Chorus of Witches. Come away! come along!
The way is wide, the way is long,
But what is that for a Bedlam throng?
Stick with the prong, and scratch with the broom.
The child in the cradle lies strangled at home,
And the mother is clapping her hands.—

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Semi-chorus of Wizards 1. We glide in
Like snails when the women are all away;
And from a house once given over to sin
Woman has a thousand steps to stray.
Semi-chorus 2. A thousand steps must a woman take,
Where a man but a single spring will make.
Voices above. Come with us, come with us, from Felussee.
Voices below. With what joy would we fly through the upper sky!
We are washed, we are 'nointed, stark naked are we;
But our toil and our pain are for ever in vain.
Both choruses. The wind is still, the stars are fled,
The melancholy moon is dead;
The magic notes, like spark on spark,
Drizzle, whistling through the dark.
Come away!
Voices below. Stay, oh, stay!
Voices above. Out of the crannies of the rocks,
Who calls?
Voices below. Oh, let me join your flocks!
I, three hundred years have striven
To catch your skirt and mount to Heaven,—
And still in vain. Oh, might I be
With company akin to me!
Both choruses. Some on a ram and some on a prong,
On poles and on broomsticks we flutter along;
Forlorn is the wight who can rise not to-night.
A half-witch below. I have been tripping this many an hour:
Are the others already so far before?
No quiet at home, and no peace abroad!
And less methinks is found by the road.
Chorus of Witches. Come onward, away! aroint thee, aroint!
A witch to be strong must anoint—anoint—

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Then every trough will be boat enough;
With a rag for a sail we can sweep through the sky;
Who flies not to-night, when means he to fly?
Both choruses. We cling to the skirt, and we strike on the ground;
Witch-legions thicken around and around;
Wizard-swarms cover the heath all over. [*They descend.*
Meph. What thronging, dashing, raging, rustling!
What whispering, babbling, hissing, bustling!
What glimmering, spurting, stinking, burning!
As Heaven and Earth were overturning.
There is a true witch element about us;
Take hold on me, or we shall be divided:—
Where are you?
Faust (*from a distance.*) Here!
Meph. What!
I must exert my authority in the house.
Place for young Voland! Pray make way, good people.
Take hold on me, doctor, and with one step
Let us escape from this unpleasant crowd:
They are too mad for people of my sort.
Just there shines a peculiar kind of light—
Something attracts me in those bushes. Come
This way; we shall slip down there in a minute.
Faust. Spirit of Contradiction! Well, lead on—
'Twere a wise feat indeed to wander out
Into the Brocken upon May-day night,
And then to isolate oneself in scorn,
Disgusted with the humours of the time.
Meph. See yonder, round a many-coloured flame
A merry club is huddled altogether:
Even with such little people as sit there
One would not be alone.

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Faust. Would that I were
Up yonder in the glow and whirling smoke,
Where the blind million rush impetuously
To meet the evil ones; there might I solve
Many a riddle that torments me!

Meph. Yet
Many a riddle there is tied anew
Inextricably. Let the great world rage!
We will stay here safe in the quiet dwellings.
'Tis an old custom. Men have ever built
Their own small world in the great world of all.
I see young witches naked there, and old ones
Wisely attired with greater decency.
Be guided now by me, and you shall buy
A pound of pleasure with a dram of trouble.
I hear them tune their instruments—one must
Get used to this damned scraping. Come, I'll lead you
Among them; and what there you do and see,
As a fresh compact 'twixt us two shall be.
How say you now? this space is wide enough—
Look forth, you cannot see the end of it—
A hundred bonfires burn in rows, and they
Who throng around them seem innumerable:
Dancing and drinking, jabbering, making love,
And cooking, are at work. Now tell me, friend,
What is there better in the world than this?

Faust. In introducing us, do you assume
The character of wizard or of devil?

Meph. In truth, I generally go about
In strict incognito; and yet one likes
To wear one's orders upon gala days.
I have no ribbon at my knee; but here,
At home, the cloven foot is honourable.
See you that snail there?—she comes creeping up,

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And with her feeling eyes hath smelt out something.
I could not, if I would, mask myself here.
Come now, we'll go about from fire to fire:
I'll be the pimp, and you shall be the lover.

[*To some old Women, who are sitting round a heap of glimmering coals.*

Old gentlewomen, what do you do out here?
You ought to be with the young rioters
Right in the thickest of the revelry—
But every one is best content at home.

General. Who dare confide in right or a just claim?
So much as I had done for them! and now—
With women and the people 'tis the same,
Youth will stand foremost ever,—age may go
To the dark grave unhonoured.

Minister. Now-a-days
People assert their rights; they go too far;
But, as for me, the good old times I praise.
Then we were all in all; 'twas something worth
One's while to be in place and wear a star;
That was indeed the golden age on earth.

*Parvenu.** We too are active, and we did and do
What we ought not perhaps; and yet we now
Will seize, whilst all things are whirled round and round,
A spoke of Fortune's wheel, and keep our ground.

Author. Who now can taste a treatise of deep sense
And ponderous volume? 'Tis impertinence
To write what none will read, therefore will I
To please the young and thoughtless people try.

Meph. (*Who at once appears to have grown very old.*)
I find the people ripe for the last day,

* A sort of fundholder.

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Since I last came up to the wizard mountain;
And as my little cask runs turbid now,
So is the world drained to the dregs.
Pedlar-witch. Look here,
Gentlemen; do not hurry on so fast,
And lose the chance of a good pennyworth.
I have a pack full of the choicest wares
Of every sort, and yet in all my bundle
Is nothing like what may be found on earth;
Nothing that in a moment will make rich
Men and the world with fine malicious mischief—
There is no dagger drunk with blood; no bowl
From which consuming poison may be drained
By innocent and healthy lips; no jewel,
The price of an abandoned maiden's shame;
No sword which cuts the bond it cannot loose,
Or stabs the wearer's enemy in the back
No——
Meph. Gossip, you know little of these times.
What has been, has been; what is done, is past.
They shape themselves into the innovations
They breed, and innovations drags us with it.
The torrent of the crowd sweeps over us;
You think to impel, and are yourself impelled.
Faust. Who is that yonder?
Meph. Mark her well. It is
Lilith.
Faust. Who?
Meph. Lilith, the first wife of Adam.
Beware of her fair hair, for she excels
All women in the magic of her locks;
And, when she winds them round a young man's neck,
She will not ever set him free again.

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Faust. There sit a girl and an old woman—they
Seem to be tired with pleasure and with play.
Meph. There is no rest to-night for any one:
When one dance ends another is begun;
Come, let us to it. We shall have rare fun.

[*Faust dances and sings with a Girl, and Mephistopheles with an old Woman.*

Brocto-phantasmist. What is this cursed multitude about?
Have we not long since proved to demonstration
That ghosts move not on ordinary feet?
But these are dancing just like men and women.
The Girl. What does he want then at our ball?
Faust. Oh! he
Is far above us all in his conceit:
Whilst we enjoy, he reasons of enjoyment;
And any step which in our dance we tread,
If it be left out of his reckoning,
Is not to be considered as a step.
There are few things that scandalize him not;
And, when you whirl round in the circle now,
As he went round the wheel in his old mill,
He says that you go wrong in all respects,
Especially if you congratulate him
Upon the strength of the resemblance.
Brocto-phantasmist. Fly!
Vanish! Unheard of impudence! What, still there!
In this enlightened age too, since you have been
Proved not to exist!—But this infernal brood
Will hear no reason and endure no rule.
Are we so wise, and is the *pond* still haunted?
How long have I been sweeping out this rubbish
Of superstition, and the world will not

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Come clean with all my pains!—it is a case
Unheard of!

The Girl. Then leave off teazing us so.

Brocto-phantasmist. I tell you, spirits, to your faces now,
That I should not regret this despotism
Of spirits, but that mine can wield it not.
To-night I shall make poor work of it,
Yet I will take a round with you, and hope
Before my last step in the living dance
To beat the poet and the devil together.

Meph. At last he will sit down in some foul puddle;
That is his way of solacing himself;
Until some leech, diverted with his gravity,
Cures him of spirits and the spirit together.

[*To Faust, who has receded from the dance.*

Why do you let that fair girl pass from you,
Who sang so sweetly to you in the dance?

Faust. A red mouse in the middle of her singing
Sprang from her mouth.

Meph. That was all right, my friend.
Be it enough that the mouse was not grey.
Do not disturb your hour of happiness
With close consideration of such trifles.

Faust. Then saw I——

Meph. What?

Faust. Seest thou not a pale
Fair girl, standing alone, far, far away?
She drags herself now forward with slow steps,
And seems as if she moved with shackled feet:
I cannot overcome the thought that she
Is like poor Margaret.

Meph. Let it be—pass on—
No good can come of it—it is not well

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To meet it—it is an enchanted phantom,
A lifeless idol; with its numbing look,
It freezes up the blood of man; and they
Who meet its ghastly stare are turned to stone,
Like those who saw Medusa.

Faust. Oh, too true!
Her eyes are like the eyes of a fresh corpse
Which no beloved hand has closed. Alas!
That is the heart which Margaret yielded to me—
Those are the lovely limbs which I enjoyed!

Meph. It is all magic, poor deluded fool;
She looks to every one like his first love.

Faust. O what delight! what woe! I cannot turn
My looks from her sweet piteous countenance.
How strangely does a single blood-red line,
Not broader than the sharp edge of a knife,
Adorn her lovely neck!

Meph. Aye, she can carry
Her head under her arm upon occasion;
Perseus has cut it off for her. These pleasures
End in delusion.—Gain this rising ground,
It is as airy here as in a [ ]
And if I am not mightily deceived,
I see a theatre.—What may this mean?

Attendant. Quite a new piece, the last of seven, for 'tis
The custom now to represent that number.
'Tis written by a Dilettante, and
The actors who perform are Dilettanti;
Excuse me, gentlemen; but I must vanish.
I am a Dilettante curtain-lifter.

END OF THE MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

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THE CENCI,

A TRAGEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY JOHN ASCHAM, 71, CHANCERY LANE, HOLBORN, AND SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1834.

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DEDICATION.

TO

LEIGH HUNT, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I inscribe with your name, from a distant country, and after an absence whose months have seemed years, this the latest of my literary efforts.

Those writings which I have hitherto published have been little else than visions which impersonate my own apprehensions of the beautiful and the just. I can also perceive in them the literary defects incidental to youth and impatience; they are dreams of what ought to be, or may be. The drama which I now present to you is a sad reality. I lay aside the presumptuous attitude of an instructor, and am content to paint, with such colours as my own heart furnishes, that which has been.

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DEDICATION.

Had I known a person more highly endowed than yourself with all that it becomes a man to possess, I had solicited for this work the ornament of his name. One more gentle, honourable, innocent, and brave; one of more exalted toleration for all who do and think evil, and yet himself more free from evil; one who knows better how to receive and how to confer a benefit, though he must ever confer far more than he can receive; one of simpler, and, in the highest sense of the word, of purer life and manners; I never knew: and I had already been fortunate in friendships when your name was added to the list.

In that patient and irreconcilable enmity with domestic and political tyranny and imposture which the tenor of your life has illustrated, and which, had I health and talents, should illustrate mine, let us, comforting each other in our task, live and die.

All happiness attend you!

Your affectionate friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Rome, *May*, 29, 1819.

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PREFACE.

A MANUSCRIPT was communicated to me during my travels in Italy, which was copied from the archives of the Cenci Palace at Rome, and contains a detailed account of the horrors which ended in the extinction of one of the noblest and richest families of that city, during the Pontificate of Clement VIII. in the year 1599. The story is, that an old man, having spent his life in debauchery and wickedness, conceived at length an implacable hatred towards his children; which showed itself towards one daughter under the form of an incestuous passion, aggravated by every circumstance of cruelty and violence. This daughter, after long and vain attempts to escape from what she considered a perpetual contamination both of body and mind, at length plotted with her mother-in-law and brother to murder their common tyrant. The young maiden, who was urged to this tremendous deed by an impulse which overpowered its horror, was evidently a most gentle and amiable being, a creature formed to adorn and be admired, and thus violently thwarted from her nature by the necessity of circumstance and opinion. The deed was quickly

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discovered, and, in spite of the most earnest prayers made to the Pope by the highest persons in Rome, the criminals were put to death. The old man had, during his life, repeatedly bought his pardon from the Pope for capital crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind, at the price of a hundred thousand crowns; the death therefore of his victims can scarcely be accounted for by the love of justice. The Pope, among other motives for severity, probably felt that whoever killed the Count Cenci deprived his treasury of a certain and copious source of revenue.* Such a story, if told so as to present to the reader all the feelings of those who once acted it, their hopes and fears, their confidences and misgivings, their various interests, passions, and opinions, acting upon and with each other, yet all conspiring to one tremendous end, would be as a light to make apparent some of the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart.

On my arrival at Rome, I found that the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest; and that the feelings of the company never

* The Papal Government formerly took the most extraordinary precautions against the publicity of facts which offer so tragical a demonstration of its own wickedness and weakness; so that the communication of the MS. had become, until very lately, a matter of some difficulty.

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failed to incline to a romantic pity for the wrongs, and a passionate exculpation of the horrible deed to which they urged her, who has been mingled two centuries with the common dust. All ranks of people knew the outlines of this history, and participated in the overwhelming interest which it seems to have the magic of exciting in the human heart. I had a copy of Guido's picture of Beatrice, which is preserved in the Colonna Palace, and my servant instantly recognised it as the portrait of *La Cenci*.

This national and universal interest which the story produces and has produced for two centuries, and among all ranks of people in a great city, where the imagination is kept for ever active and awake, first suggested to me the conception of its fitness for a dramatic purpose. In fact it is a tragedy which has already received, from its capacity of awakening and sustaining the sympathy of men, approbation and success. Nothing remained, as I imagined, but to clothe it to the apprehensions of my countrymen in such language and action as would bring it home to their hearts. The deepest and the sublimest tragic compositions, King Lear and the two plays in which the tale of Œdipus is told, were stories which already existed in tradition, as matters of popular belief and interest, before Shakspeare and Sophocles made them familiar to the sympathy of all succeeding generations of mankind.

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This story of the Cenci is indeed eminently fearful and monstrous: any thing like a dry exhibition of it on the stage would be insupportable. The person who would treat such a subject must increase the ideal, and diminish the actual, horror of the events, so that the pleasure which arises from the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring. There must also be nothing attempted to make the exhibition subservient to what is vulgarly termed a moral purpose. The highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest species of the drama, is the teaching the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself; in proportion to the possession of which knowledge, every human being is wise, just, sincere, tolerant, and kind. If dogmas can do more, it is well; but a drama is no fit place for the enforcement of them. Undoubtedly, no person can be truly dishonoured by the act of another; and the fit return to make to the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance, and a resolution to convert the injurer from his dark passions by peace and love. Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes. If Beatrice had thought in this manner, she would have been wiser and better; but she would never have been a tragic character: the few, whom such an exhibition would have interested, could never have been sufficiently interested for a dramatic purpose, from the want of finding

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sympathy in their interest among the mass who surround them. It is in the restless and anatomizing casuistry with which men seek the justification of Beatrice, yet feel that she has done what needs justification; it is in the superstitious horror with which they contemplate alike her wrongs and their revenge; that the dramatic character of what she did and suffered consists.

I have endeavoured as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were, and have sought to avoid the error of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right or wrong, false or true; thus under a thin veil converting names and actions of the sixteenth century into cold impersonations of my own mind. They are represented as Catholics, and as Catholics deeply tinged with religion. To a Protestant apprehension there will appear something unnatural in the earnest and perpetual sentiment of the relations between God and man which pervade the tragedy of the Cenci. It will especially be startled at the combination of an undoubting persuasion of the truth of the popular religion with a cool and determined perseverance in enormous guilt. But religion in Italy is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days; or a passport which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit, or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of

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which it has conducted him. Religion coexists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian Catholic, with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connexion with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and, without any shock to established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is, according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge; never a check. Cenci himself built a chapel in the court of his Palace, and dedicated it to St. Thomas the Apostle, and established masses for the peace of his soul. Thus, in the first scene of the fourth act, Lucretia's design in exposing herself to the consequences of an expostulation with Cenci after having administered the opiate, was to induce him by a feigned tale to confess himself before death; this being esteemed by Catholics as essential to salvation; and she only relinquishes her purpose when she perceives that her perseverance would expose Beatrice to new outrages.

I have avoided with great care in writing this play the introduction of what is commonly called mere poetry, and I imagine there will scarcely be found a detached simile or a single isolated description, unless Beatrice's description of the chasm appointed for

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her father's murder should be judged to be of that nature.*

In a dramatic composition the imagery and the passion should interpenetrate one another, the former being reserved simply for the full developement and illustration of the latter. Imagination is as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion. It is thus that the most remote and the most familiar imagery may alike be fit for dramatic purposes when employed in the illustration of strong feeling, which raises what is low, and levels to the apprehension that which is lofty, casting over all the shadow of its own greatness. In other respects I have written more carelessly; that is, without an over-fastidious and learned choice of words. In this respect I entirely agree with those modern critics who assert that, in order to move men to true sympathy, we must use the familiar language of men. And that our great ancestors the ancient English poets are the writers, a study of whom might incite us to do that for our own age which they have done for theirs. But it must be the real language of men in general, and not that of any particular class to whose society the writer happens to belong. So much for what I have attempted. I need not be assured that success is

* An idea in this speech was suggested by a most sublime passage in "El Purgatorio de San Patricio" of Calderon, the only plagiarism which I have intentionally committed in the whole piece.

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a very different matter; particularly for one whose attention has but newly been awakened to the study of dramatic literature.

I endeavoured whilst at Rome to observe such monuments of this story as might be accessible to a stranger. The portrait of Beatrice at the Colonna Palace is admirable as a work of art: it was taken by Guido during her confinement in prison. But it is most interesting as a just representation of one of the loveliest specimens of the workmanship of Nature. There is a fixed and pale composure upon the features: she seems sad and stricken down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness. Her head is bound with folds of white drapery, from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape, and fall about her neck. The moulding of her face is exquisitely delicate; the eyebrows are distinct and arched; the lips have that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed, and which it seems as if death scarcely could extinguish. Her forehead is large and clear; her eyes, which we are told were remarkable for their vivacity, are swollen with weeping and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene. In the whole mien there is a simplicity and dignity which, united with her exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow, are inexpressibly pathetic. Beatrice Cenci appears to have been one of those rare persons in whom energy and gentleness dwell together without destroying one ano-

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ther: her nature was simple and profound. The crimes and miseries in which she was an actor and a sufferer are as the mask and the mantle in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation on the scene of the world.

The Cenci Palace is of great extent; and, though in part modernized, there yet remains a vast and gloomy pile of feudal architecture in the same state as during the dreadful scenes which are the subject of this tragedy. The Palace is situated in an obscure corner of Rome, near the quarter of the Jews, and from the upper windows you see the immense ruins of Mount Palatine half hidden under their profuse overgrowth of trees. There is a court in one part of the Palace (perhaps that in which Cenci built the Chapel to St. Thomas,) supported by granite columns and adorned with antique friezes of fine workmanship, and built up according to the ancient Italian fashion, with balcony over balcony of open-work. One of the gates of the Palace, formed of immense stones, and leading thro' a passage, dark and lofty, and opening into gloomy subterranean chambers, struck me particularly.

Of the Castle of Petrella, I could obtain no further information than that which is to be found in the manuscript.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

COUNT FRANCESCO CENCI.

GIACOMO and BARNARDO, his Sons.

CARDINAL CAMILLO.

ORSINO, a Prelate.

SAVELLA, the Pope's Legate.

OLIMPIO and MARZIO, Assassins.

ANDREA, Servant to Cenci.

Nobles, Judges, Guards, Servants.

LUCRETIA, Wife of Cenci, and Step-mother of his Children.

BEATRICE, his Daughter.

The SCENE lies principally in Rome, but changes during the Fourth Act to Petrella, a castle among the Apulian Apennines.

TIME. During the Pontificate of Clement VIII.

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THE CENCI.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Cenci Palace. Enter COUNT CENCI *and* CARDINAL CAMILLO.

Cam. THAT matter of the murder is hushed up
If you consent to yield his Holiness
Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate.
It needed all my interest in the conclave
To bend him to this point: he said that you
Bought perilous impunity with your gold;
That crimes like yours, if once or twice compounded,
Enriched the Church, and respited from hell
An erring soul which might repent and live;
But, that the glory and the interest
Of the high throne he fills, little consist
With making it a daily mart of guilt
As manifold and hideous as the deeds
Which you scarce hide from men's revolted eyes.

Cen. The third of my possessions!—let it go!
Ah, I once heard the nephew of the Pope
Had sent his architect to view the ground,
Meaning to build a villa on my vines
The next time I compounded with his uncle:
I little thought he should outwit me so!

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Henceforth no witness—not the lamp—shall see
That which the vassal threatened to divulge,
Whose throat is choked with dust for his reward.
The deed he saw could not have rated higher
That his most worthless life:—it angers me!
Respited me from Hell!—So may the Devil
Respite their souls from Heaven. No doubt Pope Clement,
And his most charitable nephews, pray
That the Apostle Peter and the saints
Will grant for their sake that I long enjoy
Strength, wealth, and pride, and lust, and length of days,
Wherein to act the deeds which are the stewards
Of their revenue.—But much yet remains
To which they show no title.

Cam. O Count Cenci!
So much that thou mightst honourably live,
And reconcile thyself with thine own heart,
And with thy God, and with the offended world.
How hideously look deeds of lust and blood
Thro' those snow white and venerable hairs!
Your children should be sitting round you now,
But that you fear to read upon their looks
The shame and misery you have written there.
Where is your wife? where is your gentle daughter?
Methinks her sweet looks, which make all things else
Beauteous and glad, might kill the fiend within you.
Why is she barred from all society
But her own strange and uncomplaining wrongs?
Talk with me, Count:—you know I mean you well.
I stood beside your dark and fiery youth
Watching its bold and bad career, as men
Watch meteors, but it vanished not: I marked
Your desperate and remorseless manhood; now
Do I behold you, in dishonoured age,

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Charged with a thousand unrepented crimes.
Yet have I ever hoped you would amend,
And in that hope have saved your life three times.
Cen. For which Aldobrandino owes you now
My fief beyond the Pincian. Cardinal,
One thing, I pray you, recollect henceforth,
And so we shall converse with less restraint.
A man you knew spoke of my wife and daughter:
He was accustomed to frequent my house;
So the next day *his* wife and daughter came,
And asked if I had seen him; and I smiled:
I think they never saw him any more.
Cam. Thou execrable man, beware!—
Cen. Of thee?
Nay, this is idle: we should know each other.
As to my character for what men call crime,
Seeing I please my senses as I list,
And vindicate that right with force or guile,
It is a public matter, and I care not
If I discuss it with you. I may speak
Alike to you and my own conscious heart;
For you give out that you have half reformed me,
Therefore strong vanity will keep you silent
If fear should not; both will, I do not doubt.
All men delight in sensual luxury,
All men enjoy revenge; and most exult
Over the tortures they can never feel;
Flattering their secret peace with others' pain.
But I delight in nothing else. I love
The sight of agony, and the sense of joy,
When this shall be another's and that mine.
And I have no remorse and little fear,
Which are, I think, the checks of other men.
This mood has grown upon me, until now

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Any design my captious fancy makes
The picture of its wish, and it forms none
But such as men like you would start to know,
Is as my natural food and rest debarred
Until it be accomplished.

Cam. Art thou not
Most miserable?

Cen. Why miserable?—
No. I am what your theologians call
Hardened; which they must be in impudence,
So to revile a man's peculiar taste.
True, I was happier than I am, while yet
Manhood remained to act the thing I thought;
While lust was sweeter than revenge; and now
Invention palls: ay, we must all grow old:
And but that there yet remains a deed to act
Whose horror might make sharp an appetite
Duller than mine—I'd do,—I know not what.
When I was young I thought of nothing else
But pleasure, and I fed on honey sweets:
Men, by St. Thomas! cannot live like bees,
And I grew tired: yet, till I killed a foe,
And heard his groans, and heard his children's groans,
Knew I not what delight was else on earth,
Which now delights me little. I the rather
Look on such pangs as terror ill conceals:
The dry fixed eyeball, the pale quivering lip,
Which tell me that the spirit weeps within
Tears bitterer than the bloody sweat of Christ.
I rarely kill the body, which preserves,
Like a strong prison, the soul within my power,
Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear
For hourly pain.

Cam. Hell's most abandoned fiend

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Did never, in the drunkenness of guilt,
Speak to his heart as now you speak to me;
I thank my God that I believe you not.

Enter ANDREA.

Andr. My Lord, a gentleman from Salamanca
Would speak with you.

Cen. Bid him attend me in the grand saloon.
(Exit Andrea.)

Cam. Farewell; and I will pray
Almighty God that thy false, impious words
Tempt not his spirit to abandon thee. *(Exit Camillo.)*

Cen. The third of my possessions! I must use
Close husbandry, or gold, the old man's sword,
Falls from my withered hand. But yesterday
There came an order from the Pope to make
Fourfold provision for my cursed son;
Whom I had sent from Rome to Salamanca,
Hoping some accident might cut them off,
And meaning if I could to starve them there.
I pray thee, God, send some quick death upon them!
Bernardo and my wife could not be worse
If dead and damned: then, as to Beatrice—
(Looking around him suspiciously.)
I think they cannot hear me at that door.
What if they should? And yet I need not speak,
Though the heart triumphs with itself in words.
O thou most silent air, that shalt not hear
What now I think! Thou pavement, which I tread
Towards her chamber,—let your echoes talk
Of my imperious step, scorning surprise,
But not of my intent!—Andrea!

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Enter ANDREA.

Andr. My Lord!

Cen. Bid Beatrice attend me in her chamber
This evening:—no, at midnight, and alone. *(Exeunt.)*

SCENE II.

A Garden of the Cenci Palace. Enter BEATRICE *and* ORSINO, *as in conversation.*

Beatr. Pervert not truth,
Orsino. You remember where we held
That conversation;—nay, we see the spot
Even from this cypress;—two long years are past
Since, on an April midnight, underneath
The moonlight ruins of mount Palatine,
I did confess to you my secret mind.
Ors. You said you loved me then.
Beatr. You are a priest.
Speak to me not of love.
Ors. I may obtain
The dispensation of the Pope to marry.
Because I am a priest do you believe
Your image, as the hunter some struck deer,
Follows me not whether I wake or sleep?
Beatr. As I have said, speak to me not of love.
Had you a dispensation, I have not;
Nor will I leave this home of misery
Whilst my poor Bernard, and that gentle lady
To whom I owe life and these virtuous thoughts,
Must suffer what I still have strength to share.

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Alas, Orsino! all the love that once
I felt for you is turned to bitter pain.
Our's was a youthful contract, which you first
Broke, by assuming vows no Pope will loose.
And thus I love you still, but holily,
Even as a sister or a spirit might;
And so I swear a cold fidelity.
And it is well perhaps we should not marry.
You have a sly equivocating vein
That suits me not. Ah, wretched that I am!
Where shall I turn? E'en now you look on me
As you were not my friend, and as if you
Discovered that I thought so, with false smiles
Making my true suspicion seem your wrong.
Ah!—No, forgive me; sorrow makes me seem
Sterner than else my nature might have been;
I have a weight of melancholy thoughts,
And they forbode,—but what can they forbode
Worse than I now endure?

Ors. All will be well.
Is the petition yet prepared? You know
My zeal for all you wish, sweet Beatrice:
Doubt not but I will use my utmost skill,
So that the Pope attend to your complaint.

Beatr. Your zeal for all I wish.—Ah me, you are cold!
Your utmost skill——speak but one word——
(aside.) Alas!
Weak and deserted creature that I am,
Here I stand bickering with my only friend! *(To Orsino)*
This night my father gives a sumptuous feast,
Orsino; he has heard some happy news
From Salamanca, from my brothers there,
And with this outward show of love he mocks
His inward hate. 'Tis bold hypocrisy,

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For he would gladlier celebrate their deaths,
Which I have heard him pray for on his knees:
Great God! that such a father should be mine!
But there is mighty preparation made,
And all our kin, the Cenci, will be there,
And all the chief nobility of Rome.
And he has bidden me and my pale mother
Attire ourselves in festival array.
Poor lady! she expects some happy change
In his dark spirit from this act; I none.
At supper I will give you the petition:
Till when—farewell.

Ors. Farewell. *(Exit Beatrice.)*

I know the Pope
Will ne'er absolve me from my priestly vow
But by absolving me from the revenue
Of many a wealthy see; and, Beatrice,
I think to win thee at an easier rate.
Nor shall he read her eloquent petition:
He might bestow her on some poor relation
Of his sixth cousin, as he did her sister,
And I should be debarred from all access.
Then, as to what she suffers from her father,
In all this there is much exaggeration:
Old men are testy, and will have their way;
A man may stab his enemy, or his vassal,
And live a free life as to wine or women,
And with a peevish temper may return
To a dull home, and rate his wife and children;
Daughters and wives call this foul tyranny.
I shall be well content, if on my conscience
There rest no heavier sin than what they suffer
From the devices of my love—A net
From which she shall escape not. Yet I fear
Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze,

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Whose beams anatomize me, nerve by nerve,
And lay me bare, and make me blush to see
My hidden thoughts.—Ah, no! A friendless girl
Who clings to me as to her only hope:—
I were a fool, not less than if a panther
Were panic-stricken by the antelope's eye,
If she escape me. *(Exit.)*

SCENE III.

A magnificent Hall in the Cenci Palace. A Banquet.

Enter CENCI, LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, ORSINO, CAMILLO, NOBLES.

Cen. Welcome, my friends and kinsmen; welcome, ye
Princes and Cardinals, pillars of the church,
Whose presence honours our festivity.
I have too long lived like an anchorite,
And, in my absence from your merry meetings,
An evil word is gone abroad of me:
But I hope that you, my noble friends,
When you have shared the entertainment here,
And heard the pious cause for which 'tis given,
And we have pledged a health or two together,
Will think me flesh and blood as well as you;
Sinful indeed, for Adam made all so,
But tender-hearted, meek, and pitiful.

1. *Guest.* In truth, my Lord, you seem too light of heart,
Too sprightly and companionable a man,
To act the deeds that rumour pins on you.
(To his companion.)
I never saw such blithe and open cheer
In any eye!

2. *Guest.* Some most desired event,
In which we all demand a common joy,
Has brought us hither; let us hear it, Count.

Cen. It is indeed a most desired event.

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If, when a parent, from a parent's heart,
Lifts from this earth to the great Father of all
A prayer, both when he lays him down to sleep
And when he rises up from dreaming it;
One supplication, one desire, one hope,
That he would grant a wish for his two sons,
Even all that he demands in their regard—
And suddenly, beyond his dearest hope,
It is accomplished,—he should then rejoice,
And call his friends and kinsmen to a feast,
And task their love to grace his merriment.

Beatr. (to Lucretia.) Great God! how horrible!
Some dreadful ill
Must have befallen my brothers.

Lucr. Fear not, child;
He speaks too frankly.

Beatr. Ah! my blood runs cold.
I fear that wicked laughter round his eye,
Which wrinkles up the skin even to the hair.

Cen. Here are the letters brought from Salamanca;
Beatrice, read them to your mother. God,
I thank thee! In one night didst thou perform,
By ways inscrutable, the thing I sought.
My disobedient and rebellious sons
Are dead!—Why, dead!—What means this change of cheer?
You hear me not:—I tell you they are dead;
And they will need no food nor raiment more:
The tapers that did light them the dark way
Are their last cost. The Pope, I think, will not
Expect I should maintain them in their coffins.
Rejoice with me, my heart is wondrous glad.

Beatr. (Lucretia sinks, half fainting; Beatrice supports her.)
It is not true!—Dear lady, pray look up.

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Had it been true, there is a God in Heaven,
He would not live to boast of such a boon.
Unnatural man, thou knowest that it is false.
Cen. Ay, as the word of God; whom here I call
To witness that I speak the sober truth;
And whose most favouring Providence was shown
Even in the manner of their deaths. For Rocco
Was kneeling at the mass, with sixteen others,
When the church fell and crushed him to a mummy;
The rest escaped unhurt. Cristofano
Was stabbed in error by a jealous man,
Whilst she he loved was sleeping with his rival;
All in the self-same hour of the same night;
Which shows that Heaven has special care of me.
I beg those friends who love me, that they mark
The day a feast upon their calendars.
It was the twenty-seventh of December:
Ay, read the letters if you doubt my oath.
(The assembly appears confused; several of the guests rise.)
1. *Guest.* Oh, horrible! I will depart.
2. *Guest.* And I.
3. *Guest.* No, stay!
I do believe it is some jest; though, faith,
'Tis mocking us somewhat too solemnly.
I think his son has married the Infanta,
Or found a mine of gold in El Dorado;
'Tis but to season some such news; stay, stay!
I see 'tis only raillery by his smile.
Cen. (*Filling a bowl of wine, and lifting it up.*)
O thou bright wine, whose purple splendor leaps
And bubbles gaily in this golden bowl
Under the lamp-light, as my spirits do,
To hear the death of my accursed sons!
Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood,

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Then would I taste thee like a sacrament,
And pledge with thee the mighty Devil in Hell;
Who, if a father's curses, as men say,
Climb with swift wings after their children's souls,
And drag them from the very throne of Heaven,
Now triumphs in my triumph!—But thou art
Superfluous; I have drunken deep of joy,
And I will taste no other wine to-night.
Here, Andrea! bear the bowl around.

A Guest (rising.) Thou wretch!
Will none among this noble company
Check the abandoned villain?

Cam. For God's sake
Let me dismiss the guests! You are insane;
Some ill will come of this.

2. *Guest.* Seize, silence him!

1. *Guest.* I will!

3. *Guest.* And I!

Cen. (Addressing those who rise with a threatening gesture.)
Who moves? who speaks? *(Turning to the company.)*
'Tis nothing.
Enjoy yourselves.—Beware! For my revenge
Is as the sealed commission of a king,
That kills, and none dare name the murderer.

(The banquet is broken up; several of the guests are departing.)

Beatr. I do entreat you, go not, noble guests;
What, although tyranny and impious hate
Stand sheltered by a father's hoary hair;
What, if 'tis he who clothed us in these limbs
Who tortures them, and triumphs;—what, if we,
The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,
His children and his wife, whom he is bound

To love and shelter—shall we therefore find
No refuge in this merciless wide world?
Oh, think what deep wrongs must have blotted out
First love, then reverence, in a child's prone mind,
Till it thus vanquish shame and fear! O think!
I have borne much, and kissed the sacred hand
Which crushed us to the earth, and thought its stroke
Was perhaps some paternal chastisement!
Have excused much, doubted; and, when no doubt
Remained, have sought by patience, love, and tears,
To soften him; and, when this could not be,
I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights
And lifted up to God, the Father of all,
Passionate prayers: and when these were not heard
I have still borne——until I meet you here,
Princes and kinsmen, at this hideous feast,
Given at my brothers' deaths. Two yet remain,
His wife remains and I, whom, if ye save not,
Ye may soon share such merriment again
As fathers make over their children's graves.
O Prince Colonna, thou art our near kinsman;
Cardinal, thou art the Pope's chamberlain;
Camillo, thou art chief justiciary;
Take us away!

Cen. (He has been conversing with Camillo during the first part of Beatrice's speech; he hears the conclusion, and now advances.)

I hope my good friends here
Will think of their own daughters—or perhaps
Of their own throats—before they lend an ear
To this wild girl.

Beatr. (Not noticing the words of Cenci.)

Dare no one look on me?
None answer? Can one tyrant overbear

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The sense of many best and wisest men?
Or is it that I sue not in some form
Of scrupulous law, that ye deny my suit?
O God! that I were buried with my brothers!
And that the flowers of this departed spring
Were fading on my grave! and that my father
Were celebrating now one feast for all!

Cam. A bitter wish for one so young and gentle.
Can we do nothing?

Colon. Nothing that I see.
Count Cenci were a dangerous enemy:
Yet I would second any one.

A Card. And I.

Cen. Retire to your chamber, insolent girl!

Beatr. Retire thou, impious man! Ay, hide thyself
Where never eye can look upon thee more!
Wouldst thou have honour and obedience,
Who art a torturer? Father, never dream,
Thou thou mayest overbear this company,
But ill must come of ill.—Frown not on me!
Haste, hide thyself, lest with avenging looks
My brothers' ghosts should hunt thee from thy seat!
Cover thy face from every living eye,
And start if thou but hear a human step:
Seek out some dark and silent corner, there
Bow thy white head before offended God,
And we will kneel around, and fervently
Pray that he pity both ourselves and thee.

Cen. My friends, I do lament this insane girl
Has spoilt the mirth of our festivity.—
Good night, farewell. I will not make you longer
Spectators of our dull domestic quarrels.—
Another time.—

(Exeunt all but Cenci and Beatrice.)

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My brain is swimming round.
Give me a bowl of wine!
(To Beatrice.) Thou painted viper!
Beast that thou art! fair and yet terrible!
I know a charm shall make thee meek and tame.
Now get thee from my sight! *(Exit Beatrice.)*
Here, Andrea,
Fill up this goblet with Greek wine. I said
I would not drink this evening, but I must;
For, strange to say, I feel my spirits fail
With thinking what I have decreed to do. *(Drinking the wine)*
Be thou the resolution of quick youth
Within my veins, and manhood's purpose stern,
And age's firm, cold, subtle villainy;
As if thou wert indeed my children's blood
Which I did thirst to drink. The charm works well;
It must be done; it shall be done, I swear! *(Exit.)*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Cenci Palace. Enter LUCRETIA *and* BERNARDO.

Lucr. Weep not, my gentle boy; he struck but me,
Who have borne deeper wrongs. In truth, if he
Had killed me, he had done a kinder deed.
O God Almighty, do thou look upon us,
We have no other friend but only thee!
Yet weep not; though I love you as my own,
I am not your true mother.

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Ber. Oh more, more,
Than ever mother was to any child,
That have you been to me! Had he not been
My father, do you think that I should weep?

Lucr. Alas! poor boy, what else couldst thou have done?

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatr. *(In a hurried voice.)*
Did he pass this way? Have you seen him, brother?
Ah! no; that is his step upon the stairs;
'Tis nearer now; his hand is on the door;
Mother, if I to thee have ever been
A duteous child, now save me! Thou, great God,
Whose image upon earth a father is,
Dost thou indeed abandon me? He comes;
The door is opening now; I see his face;
He frowns on others, but he smiles on me,
Even as he did after the feast last night.

Enter a Servant.

Almighty God, how merciful thou art!
'Tis but Orsino's servant.—Well, what news?

Serv. My master bids me say, the Holy Father
Has sent back your petition thus unopened. *(Giving a paper.)*
And he demands at what hour 'twere secure
To visit you again.

Lucr. At the Ave Mary. *(Exit Servant.)*
So, daughter, our last hope has failed. Ah me,
How pale you look! you tremble, and you stand
Wrapped in some fixed and fearful meditation,
As if one thought were overstrong for you:
Your eyes have a chill glare. O dearest child,
Are you gone mad? If not, pray speak to me.

Beatr. You see I am not mad; I speak to you.

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Lucr. You talked of something that your father did
After that dreadful feast? Could it be worse
Than when he smiled, and cried, My sons are dead!
And every one looked in his neighbour's face
To see if others were as white as he?
At the first word he spoke, I felt the blood
Rush to my heart, and fell into a trance;
And when it past I sat all weak and wild;
Whilst you alone stood up, and with strong words
Checked his unnatural pride; and I could see
The devil was rebuked that lives in him.
Until this hour thus you have ever stood
Between us and your father's moody wrath
Like a protecting presence: your firm mind
Has been our only refuge and defence:
What can have thus subdued it? What can now
Have given you that cold melancholy look,
Succeeding to your unaccustomed fear?

Beatr. What is it that you say? I was just thinking
'Twere better not to struggle any more.
Men, like my father, have been dark and bloody,
Yet never—Oh! before worse comes of it,
'Twere wise to die: it ends in that at last.

Lucr. Oh, talk not so, dear child! Tell me at once
What did your father do or say to you?
He stayed not after that accursed feast
One moment in your chamber.—Speak to me.

Ber. O sister, sister, prithee speak to us!

Beatr. (*Speaking very slowly with a forced calmness*)
It was one word, mother, one little word;
One look, one smile. (*wildly*)
Oh! he has trampled me
Under his feet, and made the blood stream down
My pallid cheeks. And he has given us all

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Ditch water, and the fever-stricken flesh
Of buffaloes, and bade us eat or starve,
And we have eaten. He has made me look
On my beloved Bernardo, when the rust
Of heavy chains has gangrened his sweet limbs,
And I have never yet despaired—but now!
What would I say? *(Recovering herself.)*
Ah! no, 'tis nothing new.
The sufferings we all share have made me wild:
He only struck and cursed me as he passed.
He said, he looked, he did,—nothing at all
Beyond his wont, yet it disordered me.
Alas! I am forgetful of my duty,
I should preserve my senses for your sake.

Lucr. Nay, Beatrice, have courage, my sweet girl.
If any one despairs it should be I,
Who loved him once, and now must live with him
Till God in pity call for him or me.
For you may, like your sister, find some husband,
And smile, years hence, with children round your knees;
Whilst I, then dead, and all this hideous coil,
Shall be remembered only as a dream.

Beatr. Talk not to me, dear lady, of a husband.
Did you not nurse me when my mother died?
Did you not shield me and that dearest boy?
And had we any other friend but you
In infancy, with gentle words and looks,
To win our father not to murder us?
And shall I now desert you? May the ghost
Of my dead mother plead against my soul
If I abandon her who filled the place
She left with more even than a mother's love!

Ber. And I am of my sister's mind. Indeed
I would not leave you in this wretchedness,

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Even though the Pope should make me free to live
In some blithe place, like others of my age,
With sports, and delicate food, and the fresh air.
Oh, never think that I will leave you, mother!

Lucr. My dear dear children!

Enter CENCI, *suddenly.*

Cen. What, Beatrice here!
Come hither! (*She shrinks back, and covers her face.*)
Nay, hide not your face, 'tis fair;
Look up! Why, yesternight you dared to look
With disobedient insolence upon me,
Bending a stern and an inquiring brow
On what I meant; whilst I then sought to hide
That which I came to tell you—but in vain.

Beatr. (*Wildly, staggering towards the door.*)
Oh, that the earth would gape! Hide me, O God!

Cen. Then it was I whose inarticulate words
Fell from my lips, and who with tottering steps
Fled from your presence, as you now from mine.
Stay, I command you: from this day and hour
Never again, I think, with fearless eye,
And brow superior, and unaltered cheek,
And that lip made for tenderness or scorn,
Shalt thou strike dumb the meanest of mankind;
Me least of all. Now get thee to thy chamber!
Thou, too, loathed image of thy cursed mother,
(*To Ber.*) Thy milky meek face makes me sick with hate!

(*Exeunt Beatr. and Ber.*)

(*Aside.*) So much has pass'd between us as must make
Me bold, her fearful. 'Tis an awful thing
To touch such mischief as I now conceive.
So men sit shivering on the dewy bank,
And try the chill stream with their feet; once in—

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How the delighted spirit pants for joy!
Lucr. *(Advancing timidly towards him.)*
O husband, pray forgive poor Beatrice;
She meant not any ill.
Cen. Nor you perhaps?
Nor that young imp, whom you have taught by rote
Parricide with his alphabet? Nor Giacomo?
Nor those two most unnatural sons, who stirred
Enmity up against me with the Pope?
Whom in one night merciful God cut off.
Innocent lambs! they thought not any ill.
You were not here conspiring? You said nothing
Of how I might be dungeoned as a madman;
Or be condemned to death for some offence,
And you would be the witnesses?—This failing,
How just it were to hire assassins, or
Put sudden poison in my evening drink?
Or smother me when overcome by wine?
Seeing we had no other judge but God,
And he had sentenced me, and there were none
But you to be the executioners
Of his decree, enregistered in heaven?
Oh, no! You said not this?
Lucr. So help me God,
I never thought the things you charge me with!
Cen. If you dare speak that wicked lie again
I'll kill you. What! it was not by your counsel
That Beatrice disturbed the feast last night?
You did not hope to stir some enemies
Against me, and escape, and laugh to scorn
What every nerve of you now trembles at?
You judged that men were bolder than they are:
Few dare to stand between their grave and me.
Lucr. Look not so dreadfully! By my salvation,

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I knew not aught that Beatrice designed;
Nor do I think she designed any thing
Until she heard you talk of her dead brothers.
Cen. Blaspheming liar! You are damned for this!
But I will take you where you may persuade
The stones you tread on to deliver you:
For men shall there be none but those who dare
All things; not question that which I command.
On Wednesday next I shall set out: you know
That savage rock, the Castle of Petrella:
'Tis safely walled, and moated round about:
Its dungeons under-ground, and its thick towers,
Never told tales; though they have heard and seen
What might make dumb things speak. Why do you linger?
Make speediest preparation for the journey! *(Exit Lucretia.)*
The all-beholding sun yet shines; I hear
A busy stir of men about the streets;
I see the bright sky through the window panes:
It is a garish, broad, and peering day;
Loud, light, suspicious, full of eyes and ears;
And every little corner, nook, and hole,
Is penetrated with the insolent light.
Come, darkness!—Yet, what is the day to me?
And wherefore should I wish for night, who do
A deed which shall confound both night and day?
'Tis she shall grope through a bewildering mist
Of horror: if there be a sun in heaven
She shall not dare to look upon its beams,
Nor feel its warmth. Let her then wish for night;
The act I think shall soon extinguish all
For me: I bear a darker deadlier gloom
Than the earth's shade, or interlunar air,
Or constellations quenched in murkiest cloud,
In which I walk secure and unbeheld
Towards my purpose.—Would that it were done! *(Exit.)*

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SCENE II.

A Chamber in the Vatican. Enter CAMILLO *and* GIACOMO, *in conversation.*

Cam. There is an obsolete and doubtful law
By which you might obtain a bare provision
Of food and clothing—
Giac. Nothing more? Alas!
Bare must be the provision which strict law
Awards, and aged sullen avarice pays.
Why did my father not apprentice me
To some mechanic trade? I should have then
Been trained in no high-born necessities
Which I could meet not by my daily toil.
The eldest son of a rich nobleman
Is heir to all his incapacities;
He has wide wants and narrow powers. If you,
Cardinal Camillo, were reduced at once
From thrice-driven beds of down and delicate food,
A hundred servants and six palaces,
To that which nature doth indeed require——
Cam. Nay, there is reason in your plea; 'twere hard.
Giac. 'Tis hard for a firm man to bear: but I
Have a dear wife, a lady of high birth,
Whose dowry in ill hour I lent my father,
Without a bond or witness to the deed:
And children, who inherit her fine senses,
The fairest creatures in this breathing world;
And she and they reproach me not. Cardinal,
Do you not think the Pope would interpose,
And stretch authority beyond the law?
Cam. Though your peculiar case is hard, I know
The Pope will not divert the course of law.
After that impious feast the other night

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I spoke with him, and urged him then to check
Your father's cruel hand; he frowned, and said,
"Children are disobedient, and they sting
"Their fathers' hearts to madness and despair,
"Requiting years of care with contumely.
"I pity the Count Cenci from my heart;
"His outraged love perhaps awakened hate,
"And thus he is exasperated to ill.
"In the great war between the old and young,
"I, who have white hairs and a tottering body,
"Will keep at least blameless neutrality."

Enter ORSINO.

You, my good Lord Orsino, heard those words.
Ors. What words?
Giac. Alas, repeat them not again!
There then is no redress for me; at least
None but that which I may achieve myself,
Since I am driven to the brink. But, say,
My innocent sister and my only brother
Are dying underneath my father's eye.
The memorable tortures of this land,
Galeaz Visconti, Borgia, Ezzelin,
Never inflicted on their meanest slave
What these endure; shall they have no protection?
Cam. Why, if they would petition to the Pope
I see not how he could refuse it—yet
He holds it of most dangerous example
In aught to weaken the paternal power,
Being, as 'twere, the shadow of his own.
I pray you now excuse me. I have business
That will not bear delay. *(Exit Camillo.)*
Giac. But you, Orsino,
Have the petition: wherefore not present it?

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Orz. I have presented it, and backed it with
My earnest prayers and urgent interest;
It was returned unanswered. I doubt not
Bnt that the strange and execrable deeds
Alleged in it (in truth they might well baffle
Any belief) have turned the Pope's displeasure
Upon the accusers from the criminal:
So I should guess from what Camillo said.

Giac. My friend, that palace-walking devil, Gold,
Has whispered silence to his Holiness,
And, being left as scorpions ringed with fire,
What should we do but strike ourselves to death?
For he who is our murderous persecutor
Is shielded by a father's holy name,
Or I would—— *(stops abruptly.)*

Orz. What? Fear not to speak your thought.
Words are but holy as the deeds they cover:
A priest who has forsworn the God he serves;
A judge who makes truth weep at his decree;
A friend who should weave counsel, as I now,
But as the mantle of some selfish guile;
A father who is all a tyrant seems,
Were the profaner for his sacred name.

Giac. Ask me not what I think; the unwilling brain
Feigns often what it would not; and we trust
Imagination with such fantasies
As the tongue dares not fashion into words;
Which have no words, their horror makes them dim
To the mind's eye. My heart denies itself
To think what you demand.

Orz. But a friend's bosom
Is as the inmost cave of our own mind,
Where we sit shut from the wide gaze of day,
And from the all-communicating air.
You look what I suspected.

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Giac. Spare me now!
I am as one lost in a midnight wood,
Who dares not ask some harmless passenger
The path across the wilderness, lest he,
As my thoughts are, should be—a murderer.
I know you are my friend, and all I dare
Speak to my soul, that will I trust with thee.
But now my heart is heavy, and would take
Lone counsel from a night of sleepless care.
Pardon me, that I say farewell—farewell!
I would that to my own suspected self
I could address a word so full of peace.

Ors. Farewell!—Be your thoughts better or more bold.

(Exit Giacomo.)

I had disposed the Cardinal Camillo
To feed his hope with cold encouragement:
It fortunately serves my close designs
That 'tis a trick of this same family
To analyse their own and other minds.
Such self-anatomy shall teach the will
Dangerous secrets; for it tempts our powers,
Knowing what must be thought, and may be done,
Into the depth of darkest purposes:
So Cenci fell into the pit; even I,
Since Beatrice unveiled me to myself,
And made me shrink from what I cannot shun,
Shew a poor figure to my own esteem,
To which I grow half reconciled. I'll do
As little mischief as I can; that thought
Shall fee the accuser conscience. *(After a pause.)*
Now what harm
If Cenci should be murdered?—Yet, if murdered,
Wherefore by me? and what if I could take
The profit, yet omit the sin and peril

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In such an action? Of all earthly things
I fear a man whose blows outspeed his words;
And such is Cenci: and while Cenci lives
His daughter's dowry were a secret grave,
If a priest wins her.—O fair Beatrice!
Would that I loved thee not, or loving thee
Could but despise danger and gold, and all
That frowns between my wish and its effect,
Or smiles beyond it! There is no escape:
Her bright form kneels beside me at the altar,
And follows me to the resort of men,
And fills my slumber with tumultuous dreams,
So, when I wake, my blood seems liquid fire;
And, if I strike my damp and dizzy head,
My hot palm scorches it: her very name,
But spoken by a stranger, makes my heart
Sicken and pant; and thus unprofitably
I clasp the phantom of unfelt delights,
Till weak imagination half possesses
The self-created shadow. Yet much longer
Will I not nurse this life of feverous hours:
From the unravelled hopes of Giacomo
I must work out my own dear purposes.
I see, as from a tower, the end of all:
Her father dead; her brother bound to me
By a dark secret, surer than the grave;
Her mother scared and unexpostulating
From the dread manner of her wish achieved:
And she!—Once more take courage, my faint heart;
What dares a friendless maiden matched with thee?
I have such foresight as assures success:
Some unbeheld divinity doth ever,
When dread events are near, stir up men's minds
To black suggestions; and he prospers best,

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Not who becomes the instrument of ill,
But who can flatter the dark spirit, that makes
Its empire and its prey of other hearts,
Till it become his slave—as I will do. (*Exit.*)

ACT III.

SCENE I.

An apartment in the Cenci Palace. LUCRETIA; *to her enter* BEATRICE.

Beatr. (*She enters staggering, and speaks wildly.*)
Reach me that handkerchief!—My brain is hurt;
My eyes are full of blood; just wipe them for me—
I see but indistinctly:—

Lucr. My sweet child,
You have no wound; 'tis only a cold dew
That starts from your dear brow—Alas! alas!
What has befallen?

Beatr. How comes this hair undone?
Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,
And yet I tied it fast.—Oh, horrible!
The pavement sinks under my feet! The walls
Spin round! I see a woman weeping there,
And standing calm and motionless, whilst I
Slide giddily as the world reels—My God!
The beautiful blue heaven is flecked with blood!
The sunshine on the floor is black! The air
Is changed to vapours such as the dead breathe
In charnel pits!—Pah! I am choked! There creeps
A clinging, black, contaminating, mist
About me—'tis substantial, heavy, thick;

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I cannot pluck it from me, for it glues
My fingers and my limbs to one another,
And eats into my sinews, and dissolves
My flesh to a pollution, poisoning
The subtle, pure, and inmost spirit of life!
My God! I never knew what the mad felt
Before; for I am mad beyond all doubt! *(More wildly.)*
No, I am dead! These putrifying limbs
Shut round and sepulchre the panting soul,
Which would burst forth into the wandering air! *(a pause.)*
What hideous thought was that I had e'en now?
'Tis gone; and yet its burthen remains here
O'er these dull eyes—upon this weary heart!
O world! O life! O day! O misery!

Lucr. What ails thee, my poor child?—She answers not:
Her spirit apprehends the sense of pain,
But not its cause; suffering has dried away
The source from which it sprung.

Beatr. (frantically.) Like parricide—
Misery has killed its father: yet, its father,
Never like mine—O God! what thing am I?

Lucr. My dearest child, what has your father done?

Beatr. (doubtfully.)
Who art thou, questioner? I have no father. *(aside.)*
She is the mad-house nurse who tends on me.
It is a piteous office.

(To Lucretia, in a slow subdued voice.)
Do you know
I thought I was that wretched Beatrice
Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales
From hall to hall by the entangled hair;
At others, pens up naked in damp cells
Where scaly reptiles crawl, and starves her there,
Till she will eat strange flesh. This woeful story

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So did I overact in my sick dreams,
That I imagined—no, it cannot be!
Horrible things have been in this wild world,
Prodigious mixtures, and confusions strange
Of good and ill; and worse have been conceived
Than ever there was found a heart to do.
But never fancy imaged such a deed.
As—— *(pauses, suddenly recollecting herself.)*
Who art thou? Swear to me, ere I die
With fearful expectation, that indeed
Thou art not what thou seemest—Mother!

Lucr. Oh!

My sweet child, know you—

Beatr. Yet speak it not:
For then if this be truth, that other too
Must be a truth, a firm enduring truth,
Linked with each lasting circumstance of life,
Never to change, never to pass away.
Why so it is. This is the Cenci Palace;
Thou art Lucretia; I am Beatrice.
I have talked some wild words, but will no more.
Mother, come near me: from this point of time,
I am— *(her voice dies away faintly.)*

Lucr. Alas! what has befallen thee, child?
What has thy father done?

Beatr. What have I done?
Am I not innocent? Is it my crime
That one with white hair, and imperious brow,
Who tortured me from my forgotten years,
As parents only dare, should call himself
My father, yet should be——Oh, what am I?
What name, what place, what memory, shall be mine?
What retrospects, outliving even despair?

Lucr. He is a violent tyrant, surely, child:

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We know that death alone can make us free;
His death or ours. But what can he have done
Of deadlier outrage or worse injury?
Thou art unlike thyself; thine eyes shoot forth
A wandering and strange spirit. Speak to me,
Unlock those palid hands whose fingers twine
With one another.

Beatr. 'Tis the restless life
Tortured within them. If I try to speak
I shall go mad. Ay, something must be done;
What, yet I know not—something which shall make
The thing that I have suffered but a shadow
In the dread lightning which avenges it;
Brief, rapid, irreversible, destroying
The consequence of what it cannot cure.
Some such thing is to be endured or done:
When I know what, I shall be still and calm,
And never any thing will move me more.
But now!—O blood, which art my father's blood,
Circling through these contaminated veins.
If thou, poured forth on the polluted earth,
Could wash away the crime and punishment
By which I suffer—no, that cannot be!
Many might doubt there were a God above
Who sees and permits evil, and so die:
That faith no agony shall obscure in me.

Lucr. It must indeed have been some bitter wrong;
Yet what, I dare not guess. O my lost child,
Hide not in proud impenetrable grief
Thy sufferings from my fear.

Beatr. I hide them not.
What are the words which you would have me speak?
I, who can feign no image in my mind
Of that which has transformed me: I, whose thought

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Is like a ghost shrouded and folded up
In its own formless horror: of all words,
That minister to mortal intercourse,
Which wouldst thou hear? For there is none to tell
My misery; if another ever knew
Aught like to it, she died as I will die,
And left it, as I must, without a name.
Death! Death! Our law and our religion call thee
A punishment and a reward.—Oh, which
Have I deserved?

Lucr. The peace of innocence,
Till in your season you be called to heaven.
Whate'er you may have suffered, you have done
No evil. Death must be the punishment
Of crime, or the reward of trampling down
The thorns which God has strewed upon the path
Which leads to immortality.

Beatr. Ay, death—
The punishment of crime. I pray thee, God,
Let me not be bewildered while I judge.
If I must live day after day, and keep
These limbs, the unworthy temple of thy spirit,
As a foul den from which what thou abhorrest
May mock thee, unavenged—it shall not be!
Self-murder?—no, that might be no escape,
For thy decree yawns like a Hell between
Our will and it. Oh! in this mortal world
There is no vindication and no law
Which can adjudge and execute the doom
Of that through which I suffer.

Enter ORSINO.

(*She approaches him solemnly.*) Welcome, friend!
I have to tell you that, since last we met,

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I have endured a wrong so great and strange,
That neither life nor death can give me rest.
Ask me not what it is, for there are deeds
Which have no form, sufferings which have no tongue.

Ors. And what is he who has thus injured you?

Beatr. The man they call my father: a dread name.

Ors. It cannot be—

Beatr. What it can be, or not,
Forbear to think. It is, and it has been;
Advise me how it shall not be again.
I thought to die, but a religious awe
Restrains me, and the dread least death itself
Might be no refuge from the consciousness
Of what is yet unexpiated. Oh, speak!

Ors. Accuse him of the deed, and let the law
Avenge thee.

Beatr. O ice-hearted counsellor!
If I could find a word that might make known
The crime of my destroyer; and that done,
My tongue should, like a knife, tear out the secret
Which cankers my heart's core; ay, lay all bare,
So that my unpolluted fame should be
With vilest gossips a stale mouthed story
A mock, a byeword, an astonishment:—
If this were done, which never shall be done,
Think of the offender's gold, his dreaded hate,
And the strange horror of the accuser's tale,
Baffling belief, and overpowering speech;
Scarce whispered, unimaginable, wrapt
In hideous hints—O most assured redress!

Ors. You will endure it then?

Beatr. Endure! Orsino,
It seems your counsel is small profit

(*Turns from him, and speaks half to herself.*)

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Ay,
All must be suddenly resolved and done.
What is this undistinguishable mist
Of thoughts, which rise, like shadow after shadow,
Darkening each other?

Ors. Should the offender live?
Triumph in his misdeed? and make, by use,
His crime, whate'er it is, dreadful no doubt,
Thine element; until thou mayest become
Utterly lost; subdued even to the hue
Of that which thou permittest?

Beatr. (*To herself*) Mighty death!
Thou double-visaged shadow! Only judge!
Rightfullest arbiter! (*She retires absorbed in thought.*

Lucr. If the lightning
Of God has e'er descended to avenge—

Ors. Blaspheme not! His high **Providence commits**
Its glory on this earth and their own wrongs
Into the hands of men; if they neglect
To punish crime—

Lucr. But if one, like this **wretch**,
Should mock, with gold, opinion, law, and power—
If there be no appeal to that which makes
The guiltiest tremble? if, because our wrongs,
For that they are unnatural, strange, and monstrous,
Exceed all measure of belief?—*O God!*
If, for the very reasons which *should make*
Redress most swift *our injurer triumphs—*
And we, the victi punishment
Than that appoir er?——

Ors. Think no
But that there is r wrong,
So we be bold enou

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Lucr. How?
If there were any way to make all sure,
I know not—but I think it might be good
To—

Ors. Why, his late outrage to Beatrice;
For it is such, as I but faintly guess,
As makes remorse dishonour, and leaves her
Only one duty, how she may avenge:
You, but one refuge from ills ill endured;
Me, but one counsel—

Lucr. For we cannot hope
That aid, or retribution, or resource,
Will arise thence, where every other one
Might find them with less need. (*Beatrice advances.*)

Ors. Then—

Beatr. Peace, Orsino!—
And, honoured Lady, while I speak, I pray
That you put off, as garments overworn,
Forbearance and respect, remorse and fear,
And all the fit restraints of daily life,
Which have been borne from childhood, but which now
Would be a mockery to my holier plea.
As I have said, I have endured a wrong,
Which, though it be expressionless, is such
As asks atonement, both for what is past,
And lest I be reserved, day after day,
To load with crimes an overburthened soul,
And be—what ye can dream not. I have prayed
To God, and I have talked with my own heart,
And have unravelled my entangled will,
And have at length determined what is right.
Art thou my friend, Orsino? False or true?
Pledge thy salvation ere I speak.

Ors. I swear

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To dedicate my cunning, and my strength,
My silence, and whatever else is mine,
To thy commands.

Lucr. You think we should devise
His death?

Beatr. And execute what is devised,
And suddenly. We must be brief and bold.

Ors. And yet most cautious.

Lucr. For the jealous laws
Would punish us with death and infamy
For that which it became themselves to do.

Beatr. Be cautious as ye may, but prompt. Orsino,
What are the means?

Ors. I know two dull fierce outlaws,
Who thinks man's spirit as a worm's, and they
Would trample out, for any slight caprice,
The meanest or the noblest life. This mood
Is marketable here in Rome. They sell
What we now want.

Lucr. To-morrow, before dawn,
Cenci will take us to that lonely rock,
Petrella, in the Apulian Apennines.
If he arrive there—

Beatr. He must not arrive,

Ors. Will it be dark before you reach the tower?

Lucr. The sun will scarce be set.

Beatr. But I remember
Two miles on this side of the fort, the road
Crosses a deep ravine; 'tis rough and narrow,
And winds with short turns down the precipice;
And in its depth there is a mighty rock,
Which has, from unimaginable years,
Sustained itself with terror and with toil
Over a gulph, and with the agony

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With which it clings seems slowly coming down;
Even as a wretched soul hour after hour,
Clings to the mass of life, yet, clinging, leans;
And, leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss
In which it fears to fall beneath this crag,
Huge as despair, as if in weariness,
The melancholy mountain yawns; below,
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent
Raging among the caverns, and a bridge
Crosses the chasm; and high above there grow,
With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
Cedars, and yews, and pines; whose tangled hair
Is matted in one solid roof of shade
By the dark ivy's twine. At noon-day here
'Tis twilight, and at sunset blackest night.

Ors. Before you reach that bridge make some excuse
For spurring on your mules, or loitering
Until—

Beatr. What sound is that?

Lucr. Hark! No, it cannot be a servant's step;
It must be Cenci, unexpectedly
Returned.—Make some excuse for being here.

Beatr. (*To Orsino, as she goes out.*)
That step we hear approach must never pass
The bridge of which we spoke.

(*Exeunt Lucretia and Beatrice.*)

Ors. What shall I do?
Cenci must find me here, and I must bear
The imperious inquisition of his looks
As to what brought me hither: let me mask
Mine own in some inane and vacant smile.

Enter Giacomo, in a hurried manner.

How! Have you ventured hither? Know you then
That Cenci is from home?

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Giac. I sought him here,
And now must wait till he returns.
Ors. Great God!
Weigh you the danger of this rashness?
Giac. Ay!
Does my destroyer know his danger? We
Are now no more, as once, parent and child,
But man to man; the oppressor to the oppressed;
The slanderer to the slandered; foe to foe.
He has cast Nature off, who is her shield,
And Nature casts him off, who is her shame;—
And I spurn both. Is it a father's throat
Which I will shake, and say I ask not gold;
I ask not happy years; nor memories
Of tranquil childhood; nor home-sheltered love;
Though all these hast thou torn from me, and more;
But only my fair fame; only one hoard
Of peace, which I thought hidden from thy hate,
Under the penury heaped on me by thee;
Or I will—God can understand and pardon,
Why should I speak with man?
Ors. Be calm, dear friend.
Giac. Well, I will calmly tell you what he did.
This old Francesco Cenci, as you know,
Borrowed the dowry of my wife from me,
And then denied the loan; and left me so
In poverty, the which I sought to mend
By holding a poor office in the state.
It had been promised to me, and already
I bought new clothing for my ragged babes,
And my wife smiled, and my heart knew repose;
When Cenci's intercession, as I found,
Conferred this office on a wretch whom thus
He paid for vilest service. I returned
With this ill news, and we sate sad together

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Solacing our despondency with tears
Of such affection and unbroken faith
As temper life's worst bitterness; when he,
As he is wont, came to upbraid and curse,
Mocking our poverty, and telling us
Such was God's scourge for disobedient sons.
And then, that I might strike him dumb with shame,
I spoke of my wife's dowry; but he coined
A brief yet specious tale, how I had wasted
The sum in secret riot; and he saw
My wife was touched, and he went smiling forth.
And when I knew the impression he had made,
And felt my wife insult with silent scorn
My ardent truth, and look averse and cold,
I went forth too: but soon returned again;
Yet not so soon but that my wife had taught
My children her harsh thoughts, and they all cried,
"Give us clothes, father! give us better food!
What you in one night squander were enough
For months!" I looked, and saw that home was hell;
And to that hell will I return no more
Until mine enemy has rendered up
Atonement, or, as he gave life to me,
I will, reversing nature's law—

Ors. Trust me,
The compensation which thou seekest here
Will be denied.

Giac. Then—Are you not my friend?
Did you not hint at the alternative,
Upon the brink of which you see I stand,
The other day when we conversed together?
My wrongs were then less. That word parricide,
Although I am resolved, haunts me like fear.

Ors. It must be fear itself, for the bare word

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Is hollow mockery. Mark, how wisest God
Draws to one point the threads of a just doom,
So sanctifying it: what you devise
Is, as it were, accomplished.

Giac. Is he dead?

Ors. His grave is ready. Know that since we met
Cenci has done an outrage to his daughter.

Giac. What outrage?

Ors. That she speaks not, but you may
Conceive such half conjectures as I do,
From her fixed paleness, and the lofty grief
Of her stern brow, bent on the idle air,
And her severe unmodulated voice,
Drowning both tenderness and dread; and last
From this; that, whilst her step-mother and I,
Bewildered in our horror, talked together
With obscure hints; both self-misunderstood,
And darkly guessing, stumbling in our talk
Over the truth, and yet to its revenge,
She interrupted us, and with a look
Which told before she spoke it, he must die!—

Giac. It is enough. My doubts are well appeased,
There is a higher reason for the act
Than mine; there is a holier judge than I,
A more unblamed avenger. Beatrice,
Who, in the gentleness of thy sweet youth,
Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised
A living flower, but thou hast pitied it
With needless tears!—fair sister, thou in whom
Men wondered how such loveliness and wisdom
Did not destroy each other!—is there made
Ravage of thee! O heart, I ask no more
Justification! Shall I wait, Orsino,
Till he return, and stab him at the door?

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Ors. Not so; some accident might interpose
To rescue him from what is now most sure;
And you are unprovided where to fly,
How to excuse or to conceal. Nay, listen:
All is contrived; success is so assured
That—

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatr. 'Tis my brother's voice! You know me not.

Giac. My sister, my lost sister!

Beatr. Lost indeed!
I see Orsino has talked with you, and
That you conjecture things too horrible
To speak, yet far less than the truth. Now, stay not;
He might return: yet kiss me; I shall know
That then thou hast consented to his death.
Farewell, farewell! Let piety to God,
Brotherly love, justice, and clemency,
And all things that make tender hardest hearts,
Make thine hard, brother. Answer not: farewell.

(*Exeunt severally.*)

SCENE II.

A mean apartment in GIACOMO'S *house.* GIACOMO *alone.*

Giac. 'Tis midnight, and Orsino comes not yet.

(*Thunder, and the sound of a storm.*)

What! can the everlasting elements
Feel with a worm like man? If so, the shaft
Of mercy-winged lightning would not fall
On stones and trees. My wife and children sleep:
They are now living in unmeaning dreams:
But I must wake, still doubting if that deed
Be just which was most necessary. O
Thou unreplenished lamp! whose narrow fire

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Is shaken by the wind, and on whose edge
Devouring darkness hovers! Thou small flame,
Which, as a dying pulse rises and falls,
Still flickerest up and down, how very soon,
Did I not feed thee, wouldst thou fail, and be
As thou hadst never been! So wastes and sinks
Even now, perhaps, the life that kindled mine:
But that no power can fill with vital oil
That broken lamp of flesh. Ha! 'tis the blood
Which fed these veins, that ebbs till all is cold:
It is the form that moulded mine, that sinks
Into the white and yellow spasms of death:
It is the soul by which mine was arrayed
In God's immortal likeness, which now stands
Naked before Heaven's judgment seat! (*a bell strikes.*)
One! Two!
The hour crawls on; and, when my hairs are white,
My son will then perhaps be waiting thus,
Tortured between just hate and vain remorse;
Chiding the tardy messenger of news
Like those which I expect. I almost wish
He be not dead, although my wrongs are great;
Yet—'tis Orsino's step—

Enter ORSINO.

Ors. I am come
To say he has escaped.
Giac. Escaped!
Ors. And safe
Within Petrella. He pass'd by the spot
Appointed for the deed an hour too soon.
Giac. Are we the fools of such contingencies?
And do we waste in blind misgivings thus
The hours when we should act? Then wind and thunder,

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Which seemed to howl his knell, is the loud laughter
With which Heaven mocks our weakness! I henceforth
Will ne'er repent of aught, designed or done,
But my repentance.

Ors. See, the lamp is out.

Giac. If no remorse is ours when the dim air
Has drunk this innocent flame, why should we quail
When Cenci's life, that light by which ill spirits
See the worse deeds they prompt, shall sink for ever?
No, I am hardened.

Ors. Why, what need of this?
Who feared the pale intrusion of remorse
In a just deed? Although our first plan failed,
Doubt not but he will soon be laid to rest.
But light the lamp; let us not talk i'the dark.

Giac. (*lighting the lamp.*)
And yet, once quenched, I cannot thus relume
My father's life: do you not think his ghost
Might plead that argument with God?

Ors. Once gone,
You cannot now recal your sister's peace;
Your own extinguished years of youth and hope;
Nor your wife's bitter words; nor all the taunts
Which, from the prosperous, weak misfortune takes;
Nor your dead mother; nor—

Giac. Oh, speak no more!
I am resolved, although this very hand
Must quench the life that animated it.

Ors. There is no need of that. Listen: you know,
Olimpio, the castellan of Petrella
In old Colonna's time; him whom your father
Degraded from his post; and Marzio,
That desperate wretch, whom he deprived last year
Of a reward of blood, well earned and due.

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Giac. I knew Olimpio; and they say he hated
Old Cenci so, that in his silent rage
His lips grew white only to see him pass.
Of Marzio I know nothing.

Ors. Marzio's hate
Matches Olimpio's. I have sent these men,
But in your name, and as at your request,
To talk with Beatrice and Lucretia.

Giac. Only to talk?

Ors. The moments which even now
Pass onward to to-morrow's midnight hour
May memorise their flight with death: ere then
They must have talked, and may perhaps have done,
And made an end—

Giac. Listen! What sound is that?

Ors. The house-dog moans, and the beams crack: nought else.

Giac. It is my wife complaining in her sleep:
I doubt not she is saying bitter things
Of me; and all my children round her dreaming
That I deny them sustenance.

Ors. Whilst he
Who truly took it from them, and who fills
Their hungry rest with bitterness, now sleeps
Lapped in bad pleasures, and triumphantly
Mocks thee in visions of successful hate
Too like the truth of day.

Giac. If e'er he wakes
Again, I will not trust to hireling hands—

Ors. Why, that were well. I must be gone; good night.
When next we meet may all be done!

Giac. And all
Forgotten. Oh, that I had never been! (*Exeunt.*)

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ACT IV.

SCENE I.

An apartment in the castle of Petrella. Enter CENCI.

Cen. She comes not; yet I left her even now
Vanquished and faint. She knows the penalty
Of her delay: yet what if threats are vain?
Am I not now within Petrella's moat?
Or fear I still the eyes and ears of Rome?
Might I not drag her by the golden hair?
Stamp on her? Keep her sleepless till her brain
Be overworn? Tame her with chains and famine?
Less would suffice. Yet so to leave undone
What I most seek! No, 'tis her stubborn will,
Which, by its own consent, shall stoop as low
As that which drags it down.

Enter LUCRETIA.

Thou loathed wretch,
Hide thee from my abhorrence! fly, begone!
Yet stay! Bid Beatrice come hither.

Lucr. O
Husband, I pray, for thine own wretched sake,
Heed what thou doest. A man who walks like thee
Through crimes, and through the danger of his crimes,
Each hour may stumble o'er a sudden grave.
And thou art old; thy hairs are hoary grey.
As thou wouldst save thyself from death and hell,
Pity thy daughter; give her to some friend
In marriage; so that she may tempt thee not
To hatred, or worse thoughts, if worse there be.

Cen. What! like her sister, who has found a home

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To mock my hate from with prosperity?
Strange ruin shall destroy both her and thee
And all that yet remain. My death may be
Rapid, her destiny outspeeds it. Go,
Bid her come hither, and before my mood
Be changed, lest I should drag her by the hair.

Lucr. She sent me to thee, husband. At thy presence
She fell, as thou dost know, into a trance;
And in that trance she heard a voice which said,
"Cenci must die! Let him confess himself!
"Even now the accusing angel waits to hear
"If God, to punish his enormous crimes,
"Harden his dying heart!"

Cen. Why—such things are:
No doubt divine revealings may be made.
'Tis plain I have been favoured from above,
For when I cursed my sons they died—Ay—so—
As to the right or wrong that's talk—repentance—
Repentance is an easy moment's work,
And more depends on God than me. Well—well—
I must give up the greater point, which was
To poison and corrupt her soul.
(*A pause; Lucretia approaches anxiously, and then shrinks back as he speaks.*) One, two;
Ay—Rocco and Cristofano my curse
Strangled: and Giacomo, I think, will find
Life a worse hell than that beyond the grave:
Beatrice shall, if there be skill in hate,
Die in despair, blaspheming: to Bernardo,
He is so innocent, I will bequeath
The memory of these deeds, and make his youth
The sepulchre of hope, where evil thoughts
Shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb.
When all is done, out in the wide Campagna

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I will pile up my silver and my gold;
My costly robes, paintings, and tapestries;
My parchments and all records of my wealth;
And make a bonfire in my joy, and leave
Of my possessions nothing but my name;
Which shall be an inheritance to strip
Its wearer bare as infamy. That done,
My soul, which is a scourge, will I resign
Into the hands of him who wielded it.
Be it for its own punishment or theirs,
He will not ask it of me till the lash
Be broken in its last and deepest wound,
Until its hate be all inflicted. Yet,
Lest death outspeed my purpose, let me make
Short work and sure— (*going.*)

Lucr. (*stops him.*) Oh, stay! It was a feint:
She had no vision, and she heard no voice.
I said it but to awe thee.

Cen. That is well,
Vile palterer with the sacred truth of God,
Be thy soul choked with that blaspheming lie!
For Beatrice, worse terrors are in store,
To bend her to my will.

Lucr. Oh! to what will?
What cruel sufferings, more than she has known,
Canst thou inflict?

Cen. Andrea, go call my daughter,
And if she comes not tell her that I come.
What sufferings? I will drag her, step by step,
Through infamies unheard of among men:
She shall stand shelterless in the broad noon
Of public scorn, for acts blazoned abroad,
One among which shall be—What?—Canst thou guess?
She shall become (for what she most abhors

Shall have a fascination to entrap
Her loathing will) to her own conscious self
All she appears to others; and, when dead,
As she shall die unshrived and unforgiven,
A rebel to her father and her God,
Her corpse shall be abandoned to the hounds;
Her name shall be the terror of the earth;
Her spirit shall approach the throne of God
Plague-spotted with my curses. I will make
Body and soul a monstrous lump of ruin.

Enter ANDREA.

Andr. The lady Beatrice—

Cen. Speak, pale slave! What
Said she?

Andr. My Lord, 'twas what she looked she said:
"Go, tell my father that I see the gulph
"Of Hell between us two, which he may pass,—
"I will not." (*Exit Andrea.*)

Cen. Go thou quick, Lucretia;
Tell her to come; yet let her understand
Her coming is consent; and say, moreover,
That if she come not I will curse her. (*Exit Lucretia.*)
Ha!
With what but with a father's curse doth God
Panic-strike armed victory, and make pale
Cities in their prosperity? The world's Father
Must grant a parent's prayer against his child,
Be he who asks even what men call me.
Will not the deaths of her rebellious brothers
Awe her before I speak?—for I on them
Did imprecate quick ruin, and it came.

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Enter LUCRETIA.

Well? what? Speak, wretch!

Lucr. She said, "I cannot come;
"Go tell my father that I see a torrent
"Of his own blood raging between us."

Cen. (*kneeling.*) God!
Hear me! If this most specious mass of flesh,
Which thou hast made my daughter; this my blood,
This particle of my divided being;
Or rather, this my bane and my disease,
Whose sight infects and poisons me; this devil,
Which sprung from me as from a hell, was meant
To aught good use; if her bright loveliness
Was kindled to illumine this dark world;
If, nursed by thy selectest dew of love,
Such virtues blossom in her as should make
The peace of life, I pray thee, for my sake,
As thou the common God and Father art
Of her, and me, and all; reverse that doom!
Earth, in the name of God, let her food be
Poison, until she be encrusted round
With leprous stains! Heaven, rain upon her head
The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew,
Till she be speckled like a toad; parch up
Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs
To loathed lameness! All beholding-sun,
Strike in thine envy those life-darting eyes
With thine own blinding beams!

Lucr. Peace! Peace!
For thine owe sake unsay those dreadful words.
When high God grants, he punishes such prayers.

Cen. (*leaping up, and throwing his right hand towards Heaven.*)

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He does his will, I mine! This in addition,
That, if she have a child—

Lucr. Horrible thought!

Cen. That if she ever have a child; and thou,
Quick Nature! I adjure thee by thy God,
That thou be fruitful in her, and increase
And multiply, fulfilling his command,
And my deep imprecation! May it be
A hideous likeness of herself; that, as
From a distorting mirror, she may see
Her image mixed with what she most abhors,
Smiling upon her from her nursing breast.
And that the child may from its infancy
Grow, day by day, more wicked and deformed,
Turning her mother's love to misery:
And that both she and it may live, until
It shall repay her care and pain with hate,
Or, what may else be more unnatural.
So he may hunt her through the clamorous scoffs
Of the loud world to a dishonoured grave.
Shall I revoke this curse? Go, bid her come,
Before my words are chronicled in heaven. *(Exit Lucr.)*
I do not feel as if I were a man,
But like a fiend appointed to chastise
The offences of some unremembered world.
My blood is running up and down my veins;
A fearful pleasure makes it prick and tingle:
I feel a giddy sickness of strange awe;
My heart is beating with an expectation
Of horrid joy.

Enter LUCRETIA.

What? Speak!

Lucr. She bids thee curse;

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And if thy curses, as they cannot do,
Could kill her soul—
Cen. She would not come. 'Tis well,
I can do both: first take what I demand,
And then extort concession. To thy chamber!
Fly ere I spurn thee: and beware this night
That thou cross not my footsteps. It were safer
To come between the tiger and his prey. (*Exit Lucr.*)
It must be late; mine eyes grow weary dim
With unaccustomed heaviness of sleep.
Conscience! O thou most insolent of lies!
They say that sleep, that healing dew of heaven,
Steeps not in balm the foldings of the brain
Which thinks thee an impostor. I will go,
First to belie thee with an hour of rest,
Which will be deep and calm, I feel: and then—
O multitudinous Hell, the fiends will shake
Thine arches with the laughter of their joy!
There shall be lamentation heard in Heaven
As o'er an angel fallen; and upon Earth
All good shall droop and sicken, and ill things
Shall, with a spirit of unnatural life,
Stir and be quickened, even as I am now. (*Exit.*)

SCENE II.

Before the castle of Petrella. Enter BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA *above on the ramparts.*

Beatr. They come not yet.
Lucr. 'Tis scarce midnight.
Beatr. How slow
Behind the course of thought, even sick with speed,
Lags leaden-footed time!

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Lucr. The minutes pass—
If he should wake before the deed is done?
Beatr. O mother! he must never wake again.
What thou hast said persuades me that our act
Will but dislodge a spirit of deep hell
Out of a human form.
Lucr. 'Tis true he spoke
Of death and judgment with strange confidence
For one so wicked; as a man believing
In God, yet recking not of good or ill.
And yet to die without confession!
Beatr. Oh!
Believe that Heaven is merciful and just,
And will not add our dread necessity
To the amount of his offences.

Enter OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO *below.*

Lucr. See,
They come
Beatr. All mortal things must hasten thus
To their dark end. Let us go down.
(*Exeunt* LUCRETIA *and* BEATRICE *from above.*)
Olim. How feel you to this work?
Mar. As one who thinks
A thousand crowns excellent market price
For an old murderer's life. Your cheeks are pale.
Olim. It is the white reflection of your own,
Which you call pale.
Mar. Is that their natural hue?
Olim. Or 'tis my hate, and the deferred desire
To wreak it, which extinguishes their blood.
Mar. You are inclined then to this business?
Olim. Ay,

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If one should bribe me with a thousand crowns
To kill a serpent which had stung my child,
I could not be more willing.

Enter BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA *below.*

Noble ladies!

Beatr. Are ye resolved?

Olim. Is he asleep?

Mar. Is all

Quiet?

Lucr. I mixed an opiate with his drink.

He sleeps so soundly—

Beatr. That his death will be

But as a change of sin-chastising dreams,
A dark continuance of the Hell within him,
Which God extinguish! But are ye resolved?
Ye know it is a high and holy deed.

Olim. We are resolved.

Mar. As to the how this act
Be warranted, it rests with you.

Beatr. Well, follow!

Olim. Hush! hark! What noise is that?

Mar. Ha! some one comes!

Beatr. Ye conscience-stricken cravens, rock to rest
Your baby hearts It is the iron gate,
Which ye left open, swinging to the wind,
That enters whistling as in scorn. Come, follow!
And be your steps like mine, light, quick, and bold. *(Exeunt.)*

SCENE III.

An apartment in the castle. Enter BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA.

Lucr. They are about it now.

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Beart. Nay, it is done.

Lucr. I have not heard him groan.

Beatr. He will not groan.

Lucr. What sound is that!

Beatr. List! 'tis the tread of feet
About his bed.

Lucr. My God!
If he be now a cold stiff corpse!

Beatr. Oh, fear not
What may be done, but what is left undone:
The act seals all.

Enter OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO.

Is it accomplished?

Mar. What?

Olim. Did you not call?

Beatr. When?

Olim. Now.

Beatr. I ask if all is over?

Olim. We dare not kill an old and sleeping man;
His thin grey hair, his stern and reverent brow,
His veined hands crossed on his heaving breast,
And the calm innocent sleep in which he lay,
Quelled me. Indeed, indeed, I cannot do it.

Mar. But I was bolder; for I chid Olimpio,
And bade him bear his wrongs to his own grave,
And leave me the reward. And now my knife
Touched the loose wrinkled throat, when the old man
Stirred in his sleep, and said, "God! hear, Oh hear
"A father's curse! What! art thou not our father?"
And then he laughed. I knew it was the ghost
Of my dead father speaking through his lips,
And could not kill him.

Beatr. Miserable slaves!

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Where, if ye dare not kill a sleeping man,
Found ye the boldness to return to me
With such a deed undone? Base palterers!
Cowards and traitors! Why, the very conscience
Which ye would sell for gold and for revenge
Is an equivocation: it sleeps over
A thousand daily acts disgracing men;
And when a deed where mercy insults heaven——
Why do I talk?

(Snatching a dagger from one of them, and raising it.)

Hadst thou a tongue to say,
She murdered her own father, I must do it!
But never dream ye shall outlive him long!

Olim. Stop, for God's sake!

Mar. I will go back and kill him.

Olim. Give me the weapon; we must do thy will.

Beatr. Take it!—Depart! Return!

(*Exeunt Olim. and Mar.*)

How pale thou art!
We do but that which 'twere a deadly crime
To leave undone.

Lucr. Would it were done!

Beatr. Even whilst
That doubt is passing through your mind, the world
Is conscious of a change. Darkness and hell
Have swallowed up the vapour they sent forth
To blacken the sweet light of life. My breath
Comes, methinks, lighter, and the gelid blood
Runs freely through my veins. Hark!

Enter Olimpio *and* Marzio.

He is——

Olim. Dead!

Mar. We strangled him that there might be no blood!

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And then we threw his heavy corpse i' the garden
Under the balcony; 'twill seem it fell.

Beatr. (giving them a bag of coin.)

Here, take this gold, and hasten to your homes.
And, Marzio, because thou wast only awed
By that which made me tremble, wear thou this!

(Clothes him in a rich mantle.

It was the mantle which my grandfather
Wore in his high prosperity, and men
Envied his state: so may they envy thine.
Thou wert a weapon in the hand of God
To a just use. Live long and thrive! and, mark,
If thou hast crimes, repent: this deed is none.

(A horn is sounded.)

Lucr. Hark! 'tis the castle horn; my God! it sounds
Like the last trump.

Beatr. Some tedious guest is coming.

Lucr. The drawbridge is let down; there is a tramp
Of horses in the court; fly, hide yourselves!

(Exeunt Olim. and Mar.)

Beatr. Let us retire to counterfeit deep rest.
I scarcely need to counterfeit it now:
The spirit which doth reign within these limbs
Seems strangely undisturbed. I could even sleep
Fearless and calm: all ill is surely past. *(Exeunt.)*

SCENE IV.

Another apartment in the castle. Enter on one side the Legate SAVELLA, *introduced by a servant, and on the other* LUCRETIA *and* BERNARDO.

Sav. Lady, my duty to his Holiness
Be my excuse that thus unseasonably

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The Legate's followers whisper, as they passed,
They had a warrant for his instant death.
All was prepared by unforbidden means,
Which we must pay so dearly, having done.
Even now they search the tower, and find the body;
Now they suspect the truth; now they consult
Before they come to tax us with the fact.
O horrible, 'tis all discovered!

Beatr. Mother,
What is done wisely, is done well. Be bold
As thou art just. 'Tis like a truant child
To fear that others know what thou hast done,
Even from thine own strong consciousness, and thus
Write on unsteady eyes and altered cheeks
All thou wouldst hide. Be faithful to thyself,
And fear no other witness but thy fear.
For if, as cannot be, some circumstance
Should rise in accusation, we can blind
Suspicion with such cheap astonishment,
Or overbear it with such guiltless pride,
As murderers cannot feign. The deed is done,
And what may follow now regards not me.
I am as universal as the light;
Free as the earth-surrounding air; as firm
As the world's centre. Consequence, to me,
Is as the wind which strikes the solid rock,
But shakes it not. (*A cry within and tumult.*)

Voices. Murder! murder! murder!

Enter BERNARDO *and* SAVELLA.

Sav. (*To his followers.*)
Go search the castle round; sound the alarm;
Look to the gates, that none escape.

Beatr. What now?

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Ber. I know not what to say: my father's dead!

Beatr. How! dead? he only sleeps: you mistake, brother.
His sleep is very calm, very like death;
'Tis wonderful how well a tyrant sleeps.
He is not *dead*?

Ber. Dead! murdered!

Lucr. (*with extreme agitation.*) Oh, no, no,
He is not murdered, though he may be dead;
I have alone the keys of thoie apartments.

Sav. Ha! Is it so?

Beatr. My Lord, I pray excuse us;
We will retire; my mother is not well:
She seems quite overcome with this strange horror.

(*Exeunt Lucr. and Beatr.*)

Sav. Can you suspect who may have murdered him?

Ber. I know not what to think.

Sav. Can you name any
Who had an interest in his death?

Ber. Alas!
I can name none who had not, and those most
Who most lament that such a deed is done;
My mother, and my sister, and myself.

Sav. 'Tis strange! There were clear marks of violence.
I found the old man's body in the moonlight
Hanging beneath the window of his chamber,
Among the branches of a pine: he could not
Have fallen there, for all his limbs lay heaped
And effortless; 'tis true there was no blood
Favour me, Sir. (it much imports your house
That all should be made clear) to tell the ladies
That I request their presence. (*Exit Ber.*)

Enter Guards, bringing in MARZIO.

Guard. We have one.

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Officer. My Lord, we found this ruffian and another
Lurking among the rocks; there is no doubt
But that they are the murderers of Count Cenci:
Each had a bag of coin. This fellow wore
A gold-inwoven robe, which, shining bright
Under the dark rocks to the glimmering moon,
Betrayed them to our notice: the other fell
Desperately fighting.

Sav. What does he confess?

Officer. He keeps firm silence; but these lines found on him
May speak.

Sav. Their language is at least sincere. (*reads.*)

"To the Lady Beatrice.

"That the atonement of what my nature sickens to conjecture may soon arrive, I send thee, at thy brother's desire, those who will speak and do more than I dare write—

Thy devoted servant,
Orsino."

Enter Lucretia, Beatrice, *and* Bernardo.

Knowest thou this writing, Lady?

Beatr. No.

Sav. Nor thou?

Lucr. (*Her conduct throughout the scene is marked by extreme agitation.*)
Where was it found? what is it? It should be
Orsino's hand! It speaks of that strange horror
Which never yet found utterance, but which made
Between that hapless child and her dead father
A gulph of obscure hatred.

Sav. Is it so?
Is it true, Lady, that thy father did

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Such outrages as to awaken in thee
Unfilial hate?

Beatr. Not hate, 'twas more than hate:
This is most true, yet wherefore question me?

Sav. There is a deed demanding question done;
Thou hast a secret which will answer not.

Beatr. What sayest? My Lord, your words are bold and rash.

Sav. I do arrest all present in the name
Of the Pope's Holiness. You must to Rome.

Lucr. Oh, not to Rome! Indeed we are not guilty.

Beatr. Guilty! Who dares talk of guilt? My Lord,
I am more innocent of parricide
Than is a child born fatherless. Dear mother,
Your gentleness and patience are no shield
For this keen-judging world, this two-edged lie,
Which seems, but is not. What! will human laws,
Rather will ye who are their ministers,
Bar all access to retribution first,
And then, when heaven doth interpose to do
What ye neglect, arming familiar things
To the redress of an unwonted crime,
Make ye the victims who demanded it
Culprits? 'Tis ye are culprits! That poor wretch,
Who stands so pale, and trembling, and amazed,
If it be true he murdered Cenci, was
A sword in the right hand of justest God.
Wherefore should I have wielded it? Unless
The crimes which mortal tongue dare never name
God therefore scruples to avenge.

Sav. You own
That you desired his death?

Beatr. It would have been
A crime no less than his, if, for one moment,

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That fierce desire had faded in my heart.
'Tis true I did believe, and hope, and pray,
Ay, I even knew—for God is wise and just,
That some strange sudden death hung over him.
'Tis true that this did happen, and most true
There was no other rest for me on earth,
No other hope in Heaven: now what of this?

Sav. Strange thoughts beget strange deeds; and here are both.
I judge thee not.

Beatr. And yet, if you arrest me,
You are the judge and executioner
Of that which is the life of life: the breath
Of accusation kills an innocent name,
And leaves for lame acquittal the poor life
Which is a mask without it. 'Tis most false
That I am guilty of foul parricide;
Although I must rejoice, for justest cause,
That other hands have sent my father's soul
To ask the mercy he denied to me.
Now leave us free: stain not a noble house
With vague surmises of rejected crime;
Add to our sufferings and your own neglect
No heavier sum; let them have been enough.
Leave us the wreck we have.

Sav. I dare not, Lady.
I pray that you prepare yourselves for Rome:
There the Pope's further pleasure will be known.

Lucr. Oh, not to Rome! Oh, take us not to Rome!

Beatr. Why not to Rome, dear mother? There as here
Our innocence is as an armed heel
To trample accusation. God is there as
As here, and with his shadow ever clothes
The innocent, the injured, and the weak;

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And such are we. Cheer up, dear Lady; lean
On me; collect your wandering thoughts. My Lord,
As soon you have taken some refreshment,
And have all such examinations made
Upon the spot as may be necessary
To the full understanding of this matter,
We shall be ready. Mother, will you come?

Lucr. Ha! they will bind us to the rack, and wrest
Self-accusation from our agony!
Will Giacomo be there? Orsino? Marzio?
All present? all confronted? all demanding
Each from the other's countenance the thing
Which is in every heart? O misery!

(She faints, and is borne out.)

Sav. She faints: an ill appearance this

Beatr. My Lord,
She knows not yet the uses of the world.
She fears that power is as a beast which grasps
And loosens not, a snake whose look transmutes
All things to guilt which is its nutriment.
She cannot know how well the supine slaves
Of blind authority read the truth of things
When written on a brow of guilelessness:
She sees not yet triumphant Innocence
Stand at the judgment-seat of mortal man,
A judge and an accuser of the wrong
Which drags it there. Prepare yourself, my Lord
Our suite will join yours in the court below.

(Exeunt.)

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ACT V.

SCENE I.

An apartment in ORSINO'S *Palace. Enter* ORSINO *and* GIACOMO.

Giac. Do evil deeds thus quickly come to end?
Oh, that the vain remorse which must chastise
Crimes done had but as loud a voice to warn
As its keen sting is mortal to avenge!
Oh, that the hour when present had cast off
The mantle of its mystery, and shewn
The ghastly form with which it now returns
When its scared game is roused, cheering the hounds
Of conscience to their prey! Alas! alas!
It was a wicked thought, a piteous deed,
To kill an old and hoary-headed father.

Ors. It has turned out unluckily, in truth.

Giac. To violate the sacred doors of sleep;
To cheat kind nature of the placid death
Which she pepares for over-wearied age;
To drag from Heaven an unrepentant soul,
Which might have quenched in reconciling prayers
A life of burning crimes—

Ors. You cannot say
I urged you to the deed.

Giac. Oh, had I never
Found in thy smooth and ready countenance
The mirror of my darkest thoughts; hadst thou
Never with hints and questions made me look
Upon the monster of my thought, until
It grew familiar to desire—

Ors. 'Tis thus
Men cast the blame of their unprosperous acts

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Upon the abettors of their own resolve:
Or any thing but their weak guilty selves.
And yet, confess the truth, it is the peril
In which you stand that gives you this pale sickness
Of penitence; confess 'tis fear disguised
From its own shame that takes the mantle now
Of thin remorse. What if we yet were safe?

Giac. How can that be? Already Beatrice,
Lucretia, and the murderer, are in prison.
I doubt not officers are, whilst we speak,
Sent to arrest us.

Ors. I have all prepared
For instant flight. We can escape even now,
So we take fleet occasion by the hair.

Giac. Rather expire in tortures, as I may.
What! will you cast by self-accusing flight
Assured conviction upon Beatrice?
She, who alone, in this unnatural work,
Stands like God's angel ministered upon
By fiends; avenging such a nameless wrong
As turns black parricide to piety;
Whilst we for basest ends——I fear, Orsino,
While I consider all your words and looks,
Comparing them with your proposal now,
That you must be a villain. For what end
Could you engage in such a perilous crime,
Training me on with hints, and signs, and smiles,
Even to this gulph? Thou art no liar? No,
Thou art a lie! Traitor and murderer!
Coward and slave! But, no, defend thyself; *(drawing.)*
Let the sword speak what the indignant tongue
Disdains to brand thee with.

Ors. Put up your weapon.

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Is it the desperation of your fear
Makes you thus rash and sudden with a friend,
Now ruined for your sake? If honest anger
Have moved you, know, that what I just proposed
Was but to try you. As for me, I think
Thankless affection led me to this point,
From which, if my firm temper could repent,
I cannot now recede. Even whilst we speak
The ministers of justice wait below:
They grant me these brief moments. Now, if you
Have any word of melancholy comfort
To speak to your pale wife, 'twere best to pass
Out at the postern, and avoid them so.

Giac. O generous friend! how canst thou pardon me?
Would that my life could purchase thine!

Ors. That wish
Now comes a day too late. Haste: fare thee well!
Hear'st thou not steps along the corridor? *(Exit Giacomo.)*
I'm sorry for it; but the guards are waiting
At his own gate, and such was my contrivance
That I might rid me both of him and them.
I thought to act a solemn comedy
Upon the painted scene of this new world,
And to attain my own peculiar ends
By some such plot of mingled good and ill
As others weave; but there arose a Power
Which grasp'd and snapp'd the threads of my device,
And turned it to a net of ruin—Ha! *(a shout is heard.)*
Is that my name I hear proclaimed abroad?
But I will pass, wrapt in a vile disguise;
Rags on my back, and a false innocence
Upon my face, through the misdeeming crowd
Which judges by what seems. 'Tis easy then

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For a new name and for a country new,
And a new life, fashioned on old desires,
To change the honours of abandoned Rome.
And these must be the masks of that within,
Which must remain unaltered. Oh, I fear
That what is past will never let me rest!
Why, when none else is conscious but myself
Of my misdeeds, should my own heart's contempt
Trouble me? Have I not the power to fly
My own reproaches? Shall I be the slave
Of—what? A word? which those of this false world
Employ against each other, not themselves;
As men wear daggers not for self-offence.
But if I am mistaken, where shall I
Find the disguise to hide me from myself,
As now I skulk from every other eye? (*Exit*)

SCENE II.

A Hall of Justice. CAMILLO, *Judges, &c. are discovered seated.* MARZIO *is led in.*

1st Judge. Accused, do you persist in your denial?
I ask you, are you innocent or guilty?
I demand who were the participators
In your offence? Speak truth, and the whole truth.

Mar. My God! I did not kill him; I know nothing.
Olimpio sold the robe to me from which
You would infer my guilt.

2nd Judge. Away with him!

1st Judge. Dare you, with lips yet white from the rack's kiss,
Speak false? Is it so soft a questioner,

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That you would bandy lover's talk with it
Till it wind out your life and soul? Away!

Mar. Spare me! O spare! I will confess.

1*st Judge.* Then speak.

Mar. I strangled him in his sleep.

1*st Judge.* Who urged you to it?

Mar. His own son Giacomo, and the young prelate
Orsino sent me to Petrella; there
The ladies Beatrice and Lucretia
Tempted me with a thousand crowns, and I
And my companion forthwith murdered him.
Now let me die.

1*st Judge.* This sounds as bad as truth. Guards, there,
Lead forth the prisoners.

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* GIACOMO, *guarded.*
Look upon this man;
When did you see him last?

Beatr. We never saw him.

Mar. You know me too well, Lady Beatrice.

Beatr. I know thee! How? where? when?

Mar. You know 'twas I
Whom you did urge with menaces and bribes
To kill your father. When the thing was done
You clothed me in a robe of woven gold
And bade me thrive: how I have thriven, you see.
You, my Lord Giacomo, Lady Lucretia,
You know that what I speak is true.
(*Beatrice advances towards him; he covers his face, and shrinks back.*)
Oh, dart
The terrible resentment of those eyes
On the dead earth! Turn them away from me!
They wound: 'twas torture forced the truth. My Lords,
Having said this, let me be led to death.

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Mar. My God! I did
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Beatr. Poor wretch, I pity thee: yet stay awhile.
Cam. Guards lead him not away.
Beatr. Cardinal Camillo,
You have a good repute for gentleness
And wisdom: can it be that you sit here
To countenance a wicked farce like this?
When some obscure and trembling slave is dragged
From sufferings which might shake the sternest heart,
And bade to answer, not as he believes,
But as those may suspect, or do desire,
Whose questions thence suggest their own reply;
And that in peril of such hideous torments
As merciful God spares even the damned. Speak now
The thing you surely know, which is, that you
If your fine frame were stretched upon that wheel,
And you were told: "Confess that you did poison
Your little nephew; that fair blue-eyed child
Who was the loadstar of your life:"—and though
All see, since his most swift and piteous death,
That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time,
And all the things hoped for or done therein
Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief,
Yet you would say, "I confess any thing:"
And beg from your tormentors, like that slave,
The refuge of dishonourable death.
I pray thee, Cardinal, that thou assert
My innocence.
Cam. (*much moved.*) What shall we think, my Lords?
Shame on these tears! I thought the heart was frozen
Which is their fountain. I would pledge my soul
That she is guiltless.
Judge. She must be tortured.
Cam. I would as soon have tortured mine own nephew
If he now lived he would be just her age;

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His hair, too, was her colour, and his eyes
Like her's in shape, but blue and not so deep)
As that most perfect image of God's love
That ever came sorrowing upon the earth.
She is as pure as speechless infancy.

Judge. Well, be her purity on your head, my Lord,
If you forbid the rack. His Holiness
Enjoined us to pursue this monstrous crime
By the severest forms of law; nay, even,
To stretch a point against the criminals.
The prisoners stand accused of parricide
Upon such evidence as justifies
Torture.

Beatr. What evidence? This man's?

Judge. Even so.

Beatr. *(to Marzio.)* Come near. And who art thou thus chosen forth
Out of the multitude of living men
To kill the innocent?

Mar. I am Marzio,
Thy father's vassal.

Beatr. Fix thine eyes on mine;
Answer to what I ask. *(turning to the Judges.)*
I prithee mark
His countenance: unlike bold calumny
Which sometimes dares not speak the thing it looks,
He dares not look the thing he speaks, but bends
His gaze on the blind earth.
(to Marzio.) What! wilt thou say
That I did murder my own father?

Mar. Oh!
Spare me! My brain swims round—I cannot speak—
It was that horrid torture forced the truth.

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Take me away! Let her not look on me!
I am a guilty miserable wretch;
I have said all I know; now let me die!

Beatr. My Lords, if by my nature I had been
So stern as to have planned the crime alleged,
Which your suspicions dictate to this slave,
And the rack makes him utter, do you think
I should have left this two-edged instrument
Of my misdeed; this man, this bloody knife
With my own name engraven on the heft
Lying unsheathed amid a world of foes,
For my own death? That, with such horrible need
For deepest silence, I should have neglected
So trivial a precaution, as the making
His tomb the keeper of a secret written
On a thief's memory? What is his poor life?
What are a thousand lives? A parricide
(turning to MARZIO.)
And thou—
Has trampled them like dust; and see, he lives!

Mar. Oh, spare me! Speak to me no more!
That stern yet piteous look, those solemn tones,
Wound worse than torture.
(To the Judges.) I have told it all;
For pity's sake lead me away to death.

Cam. Guards, lead him nearer the Lady Beatrice.
He shrinks from her regard like autumn's leaf
From the keen breath of the serenest north.

Beatr. O thou, who tremblest on the giddy verge
Of life and death, pause ere thou answerest me;
So mayst thou answer God with less dismay:
What evil have we done thee? I, alas!
Have lived but on this earth a few sad years,
And so my lot was ordered, that a father

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First turned the moments of awakening life
To drops, each poisoning youth's sweet hope; and then
Stabbed with one blow my everlasting soul
And my untainted fame, and even that peace
Which sleeps within the core of the heart's heart.
But the wound was not mortal; so my hate
Became the only worship I could lift
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And that which now compels thee to reply
To what I ask. Am I, or am I not,
A parricide?

Mar. Thou art not!

Judge. What is this?

Mar. I here declare those whom I did accuse
Are innocent. 'Tis I alone am guilty.

Judge. Drag him away to torments; let them be
Subtle and long drawn out, to tear the folds
Of the heart's inmost cell. Unbind him not
Till he confess.

Mar. Torture me as ye will.
A keener pang has wrung a higher truth
From my last breath. She is most innocent!
Bloodhounds, not men, glut yourselves well with me;
I will not give you that fine piece of nature
To rend and ruin. *(Exit Marzio, guarded.)*

Cam. What say ye now, my Lords?

Judge. Let tortures strain the truth till it be white
As snow thrice sifted by the frozen wind.

Cam. Yet stained with blood.

Judge. *(to Beatrice.)* Know you this paper, Lady?

Beatr. Entrap me not with questions. Who stands here
As my accuser? Ha! wilt thou be he,
Who art my judge? Accuser, witness, judge,
What, all in one? Here is Orsino's name.
Where is Orsino? Let his eye meet mine.
What means this scrawl? Alas! ye know not what,
And therefore on the chance that it may be
Some evil, will ye kill us?

Enter an Officer.

Officer. Marzio's dead.

Judge. What did he say?

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Officer. Nothing. As soon as we
Had bound him on the wheel, he smiled on us,
As one who baffles a deep adversary;
And, holding his breath, died.

Judge. There remains nothing
But to apply the question to these prisoners,
Who yet remain stubborn.

Cam. I overrule
Further proceedings, and in the behalf
Of these most innocent and noble persons
Will use my interest with the Holy Father.

Judge. Let the Pope's pleasure then be done. Meanwhile
Conduct these culprits each to separate cells;
And be the engines ready: for this night,
If the Pope's resolution be as grave,
Pious, and just, as once, I'll wring the truth
Out of those nerves and sinews, groan by groan. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE III.

The cell of a prison. BEATRICE *is discovered asleep on a couch.* *Enter* BERNARDO.

Ber. How gently slumber rests upon her face,
Like the last thoughts of some day sweetly spent
Closing in night and dreams, and so prolonged.
After such torments as she bore last night,
How light and soft her breathing comes. Ah, me!
Methinks that I shall never sleep again.
But I must shake the heavenly dew of rest
From this sweet folded flower, thus—wake! awake!
What, sister, canst thou sleep?

Beatr. (*awaking.*) I was just dreaming

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That we were all in Paradise. Thou knowest
This cell seems like a kind of Paradise
After our father's presence.

Ber. Dear dear sister,
Would that thy dream were not a dream! O God!
How shall I tell?

Beatr. What wouldst thou tell, sweet brother?

Ber. Look not so calm and happy, or even whilst
I stand considering what I have to say
My heart will break.

Beatr. See now, thou mak'st me weep:
How very friendless thou wouldst be, dear child,
If I were dead. Say what thou hast to say.

Ber. They have confessed; they could endure no more
The tortures—

Beatr. Ha! What was there to confess?
They must have told some weak and wicked lie
To flatter their tormentors. Have they said
That they were guilty? O white innocence,
That thou shouldst wear the mask of guilt to hide
Thine awful and serenest countenance
From those who know thee not!

Enter JUDGE, *with* LUCRETIA *and* GIACOMO, *guarded.*

Ignoble hearts!
For some brief spasms of pain, which are at least
As mortal as the limbs through which they pass,
Are centuries of high splendour laid in dust,
And that eternal honour which should live,
Sun-like, above the reek of mortal fame,
Changed to a mockery and a bye-word? What!
Will you give up these bodies to be dragged
At horses' heels, so that our hair should sweep

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The footsteps of the vain and senseless crowd,
Who, that they may make our calamity
Their worship and their spectacle, will leave
The churches and the theatres as void
As their own hearts? Shall the light multitude
Fling, at their choice, curses or faded pity,
Sad funeral flowers to deck a living corpse,
Upon us as we pass to pass away,
And leave—what memory of our having been?
Infamy, blood, terror, despair? O thou,
Who wert a mother to the parentless,
Kill not thy child! Let not her wrongs kill thee!
Brother, lie down with me upon the rack,
And let us each be silent as a corpse;
It soon will be as soft as any grave.
'Tis but the falsehood it can wring from fear
Makes the rack cruel.

Giac. They will tear the truth
Even from thee at last, those cruel pains:
For pity's sake say thou art guilty now.

Lucr. Oh, speak the truth! Let us all quickly die,
And after death God is our judge, not they;
He will have mercy on us.

Ber. If indeed
It can be true, say so, dear sister mine;
And then the Pope will surely pardon you,
And all be well.

Judge. Confess, or I will warp
Your limbs with such keen tortures—

Beatr. Tortures! Turn
The rack henceforth into a spinning wheel!
Torture your dog, that he may tell when last
He lapped the blood his master shed—not me!
My pangs are of the mind, and of the heart,

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And of the soul; ay, of the inmost soul,
Which weeps within tears as of burning gall
To see, in this ill world where none are true,
My kindred false to their deserted selves;
And with considering all the wretched life
Which I have lived, and its now wretched end,
And the small justice shewn by Heaven and Earth
To me or mine; and what a tyrant thou art,
And what slaves these; and what a world we make,
The oppressor and the oppressed—such pangs compel
My answer. What is it thou wouldst with me?

Judge. Art thou not guilty of thy father's death?

Beatr. Or wilt thou rather tax high judging-God
That he permitted such an act as that
Which I have suffered, and which he beheld;
Made it unutterable, and took from it
All refuge, all revenge, all consequence,
But that which thou hast called my father's death?
Which is or is not what men call a crime,
Which either I have done, or have not done;
Say what ye will. I shall deny no more.
If ye desire it thus, thus let it be,
And so an end of all. Now do your will;
No other pains shall force another word.

Judge. She is convicted, but has not confessed.
Be it enough. Until their final sentence
Let none have converse with them. You, young Lord,
Linger not here!

Beatr. Oh, tear him not away!

Judge. Guards, do your duty.

Ber. (*embracing Beatrice.*) Oh! would ye divide
Body from soul?

Officer. This is the headsman's business.

(*Exeunt all but Lucr, Beatr. and Giac.*)

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Giac. Have I confessed? Is it all over now?
No hope! No refuge! O weak wicked tongue,
Which hast destroyed me, would that thou hadst been
Cut out and thrown to dogs first! To have killed
My father first, and then betrayed my sister,
Ay, thee! the one thing innocent and pure
In this black guilty world, to that which I
So well deserve! My wife! my little ones!
Destitute, helpless, and I—Father! God!
Canst thou forgive even the unforgiving,
When their full hearts break thus, thus!

(*Covers his face, and weeps.*)

Lucr. O my child!
To what a dreadful end are we all come!
Why did I yield? Why did I not sustain
Those torments? Oh, that I were all dissolved
Into these fast and unavailing tears,
Which flow and feel not!

Beatr. What 'twas weak to do,
'Tis weaker to lament, once being done;
Take cheer! The God who knew my wrong, and made
Our speedy act the angel of his wrath,
Seems, and but seems, to have abandoned us.
Let us not think that we shall die for this.
Brother, sit near me; give me your firm hand.
You had a manly heart. Bear up! bear up!
O dearest Lady; put your gentle head
Upon my lap, and try to sleep awhile:
Your eyes look pale, hollow, and overworn,
With heaviness of watching and slow grief.
Come, I will sing you some low sleepy tune,
Not cheerful, nor yet sad; some dull old thing,
Some outworn and unused monotony,

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Such as our country gossips sing and spin,
Till they almost forget they live: lie down
So, that will do. Have I forgot the words?
Faith! they are sadder than I thought they were.

SONG.

False friend, wilt thou smile or weep
When my life is laid asleep?
Little cares for a smile or a tear
The clay-cold corpse upon the bier!
Farewell! Heigho!
What is this whispers low?
There is a snake in thy smile, my dear;
And a bitter poison within thy tear.

Sweet sleep, were death like to thee,
Or if thou couldst mortal be,
I would close these eyes of pain;
When to wake? Never again.
O World, farewell!
Listen to the passing bell!
It says, thou and I must part,
With a light and a heavy heart. (*The scene closes.*)

SCENE IV.

A hall of the Prison. Enter CAMILLO *and* BERNARDO.

Cam. The Pope is stern; not to be moved or bent.
He looked as calm and keen as is the engine
Which tortures and which kills, exempt itself
From aught that it inflicts; a marble form,
A rite, a law, a custom: not a man.

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He frowned, as if to frown had been the trick
Of his machinery on the advocates
Presenting the defences, which he tore
And threw behind, muttering with hoarse harsh voice:
"Which among ye defended your old father,
"Killed in his sleep?" Then to another: "Thou
"Dost this in virtue of thy place; 'tis well."
He turned to me then, looking sad deprecation,
And said these three words coldly: "They must die!"

Ber. And yet you left him not?

Cam. I urged him still;
Pleading, as I could guess, the devilish wrong
Which prompted your unnatural parent's death.
And he replied: "Paolo Santa Croce
"Murdered his mother yester evening,
"And he is fled. Parricide grows so rife,
"That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young
"Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.
"Authority, and power, and hoary hair,
"Are grown crimes capital. You are my nephew,
"You come to ask their pardon; stay a moment.
"Here is their sentence; never see me more
"Till, to the letter, it be all fulfilled."

Ber. O God, not so! I did believe indeed
That all you said was but sad preparation
For happy news. Oh, there are words and looks
To bend the sternest purpose! Once I knew them:
Now I forget them at my dearest need.
What think you if I seek him out, and bathe
His feet and robe with hot and bitter tears?
Importune him with prayers, vexing his brain
With my perpetual cries, until in rage
He strike me with his pastoral cross, and trample
Upon my prostrate head, so that my blood

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May stain the senseless dust on which he treads,
And remorse waken mercy? I will do it!
Oh, wait till I return! (*rushes out.*)

Cam. Alas! poor boy!
A wreck-devoted seaman thus might pray
To the deaf sea.

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* GIACOMO, *guarded.*

Beatr. I hardly dare to fear
That thou bring'st other news than a just pardon.

Cam. May God in heaven be less inexorable
To the Pope's prayers than he has been to mine.
Here is the sentence and the warrant.

Beatr. (*wildly*) O
My God! Can it be possible I have
To die so suddenly? So young to go
Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground!
To be nailed down into a narrow place;
To see no more sweet sunshine; hear no more
Blithe voice of living thing; muse not again
Upon familiar thoughts, sad, yet thus lost—
How fearful! To be nothing! or to be—
What? Oh, where am I? Let me not go mad!
Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts! If there should be
No God, no Heaven, no Earth, in the void world;
The wide, grey, lampless, deep, unpeopled world!
If all things then should be—my father's spirit,
His eye, his voice, his touch, surrounding me;
The atmosphere and breath of my dead life!
If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,
Even the form which tortured me on earth,
Masked in grey hairs and wrinkles, he should come
And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix

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His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down!
For was he not alone omnipotent
On Earth, and ever present? Even tho' dead,
Does not his spirit live in all that breathe,
And work for me and mine still the same ruin,
Scorn, pain, despair? Who ever yet returned
To teach the laws of death's untrodden realm?
Unjust perhaps as those which drive us now,
Oh whither, whither?

Lucr. Trust in God's sweet love,
The tender promises of Christ: ere night,
Think we shall be in Paradise.

Beatr. 'Tis past!
Whatever comes, my heart shall sink no more.
And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill:
How tedious, false, and cold, seem all things. I
Have met with much injustice in this world;
No difference has been made by God or man,
Or any power moulding my wretched lot,
'Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.
I am cut off from the only world I know,
From light, and life, and love, in youth's sweet prime.
You do well telling me to trust in God:
I hope I do trust in him. In whom else
Can any trust? And yet my heart is cold.

(During the latter speeches GIACOMO *has retired conversing with* CAMILLO, *who now goes out.* GIACOMO *advances.)*

Giac. Know you not, mother—sister, know you not,
Bernardo even now is gone to implore
The Pope to grant our pardon?

Lucr. Child, perhaps
It will be granted. We may all then live
To make these woes a tale for distant years;

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Oh, what a thought! It gushes to my heart
Like the warm blood.

Beatr. Yet both will soon be cold.
Oh, trample out that thought! Worse than despair,
Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope:
It is the only ill which can find place
Upon the giddy, sharp, and narrow hour
Tottering beneath us. Plead with the swift frost
That it should spare the eldest flower of spring:
Plead with awakening earthquake, o'er whose couch
Even now a city stands, fair, strong, and free;
Now stench and blackness yawn, like death. Oh, plead
With famine, or wind-walking pestilence,
Blind lightning, or the deaf sea, not with man!
Cruel, cold, formal man! righteous in words,
In deeds a Cain. No, mother, we must die,
Since such is the reward of innocent lives,
Such the alleviation of worst wrongs.
And, whilst our murderers live, and hard cold men,
Smiling and slow, walk thro' a world of tears
To death as to life's sleep, 'twere just the grave
Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death,
And wind me in thine all-embracing arms!
Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
And rock me to the sleep from which none wake.
Live ye, who live, subject to one another
As we were once, who now——

BERNARDO *rushes in.*

Ber. Oh, horrible!
That tears, that looks, that hope poured forth in prayer,
Even till the heart is vacant and despairs,
Should all be vain! The ministers of death
Are waiting round the doors. I thought I saw

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Blood on the face of one—what if 'twere fancy?
Soon the heart's blood of all I love on earth
Will sprinkle him, and he will wipe it off
As if 'twere only rain. O life! O world!
Cover me! let me be no more! To see
That perfect mirror of pure innocence
Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,
Shivered to dust! To see thee, Beatrice,
Who made all lovely thou didst look upon—
Thee, light of life—dead, dark! while I say, sister,
To hear I have no sister; and thou, mother,
Whose love was a bond to all our loves—
Dead! The sweet bond broken!

Enter CAMILLO *and Guards.*

They come! Let me
Kiss those warm lips before their crimson leaves
Are blighted—white—cold. Say farewell, before
Death chokes that gentle voice! Oh, let me hear
You speak!

Beatr. Farewell, my tender brother. Think
Of our sad fate with gentleness, as now:
And let mild pitying thoughts lighten for thee
Thy sorrow's load. Err not in harsh despair,
But tears and patience. One thing more, my child,
For thine own sake be constant to the love
Thou bearest us; and to the faith that I,
Though wrapt in a strange cloud of crime and shame,
Lived ever holy and unstained. And though
Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common name
Be as a mark stamped on thine innocent brow
For men to point at as they pass, do thou
Forbear, and never think a thought unkind

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Of those who perhaps love thee in their graves.
So mayest thou die as I do, fear and pain
Being subdued. Farewell! farewell! farewell!

Ber. I cannot say, farewell!

Cam. O Lady Beatrice!

Beatr. Give yourself no unnecessary pain,
My dear Lord Cardinal. Here, Mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair
In any simple knot; ay, that does well.
And yours I see is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another! now
We shall not do it any more. My Lord,
We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well.

END OF VOL I.

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